


LIVES AND TIMES

*of the
27 Signers
of the*

*Mecklenburg Declaration
of Independence of
May 20, 1775*

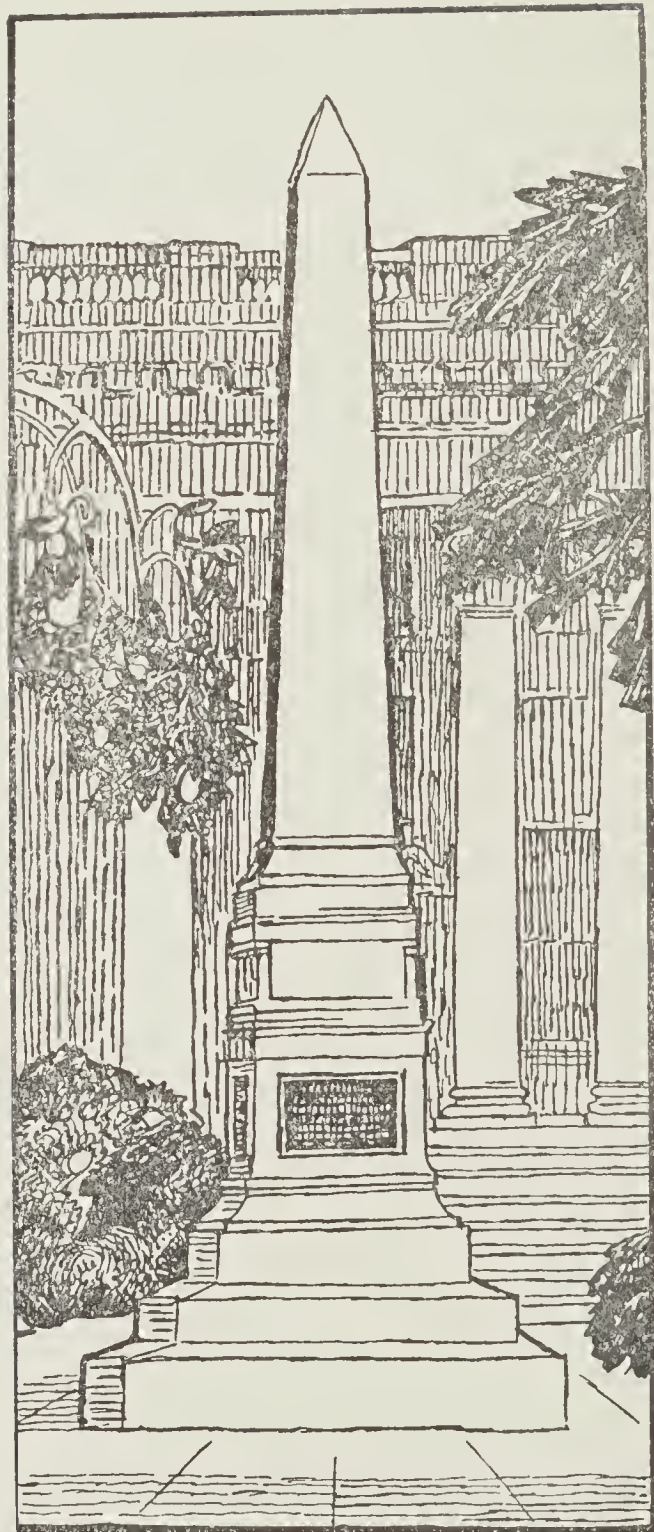
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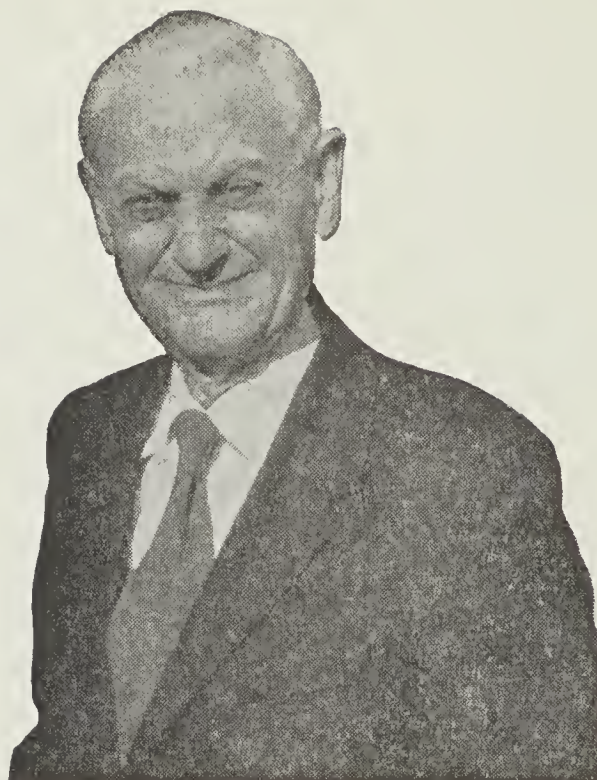
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LEGEND

The Artist's Sketch on the Opposite Page Depicts the Monument Erected in 1898 on the Courthouse Plaza, Charlotte, N. C., by the Citizens of Mecklenburg County in honor of the 27 Signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence of May 20, 1775, and was contributed to this book by Charlotte's Noted Artist, Kenneth W. Whitsett.

The names of all of the Signers of the Declaration are inscribed in Bold Relief on the Bronze Plaque on this Monument.



VICTOR C. KING

Born (1880) and reared in Dresden, Tenn., son of Robert Burton King, born 1826 in Mecklenburg County, son of John W. King, born in Mecklenburg 1792; Mother Angeline Johnson Neal King, born 1844 Harrodsburg, Ky., of Mecklenburg ancestry; author entered printing trade 1898; moved to Chicago 1902; married to Julia Ann Hruby, 1912; entered insurance business 1910; moved to North Carolina 1926; settled in Charlotte 1936; joined Mecklenburg Times as staff writer and Courthouse reporter 1946; wrote "History of Origin of City of Charlotte;" appointed Official Historian of Mecklenburg County; life member Charlotte Writer's Club; co-founder Mecklenburg Historical Association; member North Carolina Society of County and Local Historians; presented this Society's award for historical feature articles on the "Declaration Signers" published in Mecklenburg Times during 1956.

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May 20, 1775*

PIONEERS EXTRAORDINARY

COMPILED AND EDITED
BY
VICTOR C. KING
Official Historian Mecklenburg County.
Charlotte, N. C.
1956

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DEDICATION

The author is glad to dedicate this work to Hon. Charles W. Allison, Sr., who contributed the indisputable preface upon the actuality of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence and for his material aid in my research work and the publication of the sketches in book form.

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By

VICTOR C. KING

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Charlotte, N. C.

FOREWORD

When Herodotus, the world's first historian, began his history upon the Greek wars of 3,500 years ago, he said:

"I write that the deeds of brave men may not be forgotten."

We, too, the compilers of this volume, write that the 27 brave, good men who signed the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence of May 20, 1775, shall not be forgotten.

History has particularly interested me ever since the day our 6th grade teacher had the class lay aside our history books while she related to us in a most fascinating manner the story of Napoleon's march on Moscow, how the frigid winds and snow all but destroyed his army and of the long, humiliating march back to France.

The lives of the ancients foretell the life we live.

Human nature is and has always been the same the world over. All men hope for human freedom and a government of the people by the people.

This happy sequence, however, has only been achieved within the 180 years since the Mecklenburg Declaration was conceived.

Would you like to know how this book happened to be written?

Two years ago, inspired by my hobby of reading the history and thoughts of the ancients, I decided to read the biography of the 27 signers of the Declaration.

Much to my amazement, however, I discovered the historians had neglected them woefully—except three or four of the leaders.

I thereupon decided to write their history myself. But their public acts and their genealogical history had become so obscured by the shadows of the 181 years since that glorious May 20th that I found the task was beyond my strength. I then conceived the idea of calling upon as many descendants of the Signers as possible to write the sketch of their own ancestor. How could this plan be accomplished? My friends suggested that I contact the Daughters of the American Revolution.

"They have done more to preserve the history of the Signers than all of the historians combined," I was told.

And that statement I found to be true.

Announcement of my plans were made in the various chapter meetings of this organization and soon thereafter I was furnished with much of the data for the sketches I have written and several of the Daughters sent me sketches they had written upon their own Signer.

Heaven's blessings upon the Daughters of the American Revolution!

Many, many genealogical riddles have been encountered in our research, many, many dates had to be confirmed, land deeds by the score investigated, wills examined and the North Carolina Collected Colonial Records briefed.

And now I make my best bow to my co-byliners.

Foremost among the score or more of my patrons in this work has been Mr. Bill Arp Lowrance, editor and published of The Mecklenburg Times, who so graciously published each Signer's sketch as it was written.

Other friends and genealogists and historians who have so materially aided me in the preparation of the various sketches in the book are too numerous to mention—except, perhaps, the following: James A. Stenhouse, president of the Mecklenburg Historical Association; Mrs. George J. Mitchell, Mrs. Willis C. Strange, Kenneth Whitsett, Phil N. Alexander, Mrs. George Petteway, Miss Clara Harris, Dr. Alvah Stafford, the noted Alexander genealogist; Charles W. Brockman of the public library and his various assistants and numerous descendants of the various signers of the Declaration.

VICTOR C. KING

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Charlotte, N. C.

He who cannot comprehend the present let him read
the past.

—Seneca

P R E F A C E

This volume aims to perpetuate the memory of the 27 signers of the *Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence* of May 19-20, 1775—men whose act and lives have so greatly enriched these two hundred years of life in Charlotte, Mecklenburg, North Carolina and the United States.

Proud are those whose heritage flows from a fountain which had its origin in a cluster of springs of valiant deeds.

When these brave and honorable men placed their signatures on that document—equivalent to treason in the minds of the English lords—a new form of government was born, a government by representation, “a government of the people, by the people, for the people.”

The example of these brave, good men gives each succeeding generation something grand and noble upon which to look back when they consider whence and how our community came into existence. There are some illogical individuals, however, who would destroy the cornerstone of our edifice. But the statements of men who lived in those stirring times—some of whom were in the Declaration convention—cannot be denied. They speak today as if 181 years have not passed between us and that eventful year—1775.

What was the first move made by the settlers following the abolishment of the King's authority by the Declaration?

They solved the predicament in which the Declaration had placed them by convening another meeting in Charlotte on May 31st in which they adopted 17 resolves whereby a temporary government was established for the county—the world's first truly representative form of government.

No one—not even the Declaration's most ingenious “devil's advocate”—doubts the actuality of the 17 resolves of May 31, 1775.

The next positive evidence of the actuality of the Declaration was the arrest of John McKnitt Alexander, secre-

tary of the Declaration convention, for his refusal to attend the King's court at Salisbury as a juror on June 1st—the next day after the resolves were adopted.

When taken into court, Mecklenburg's noted patriot was fined 10 pounds (English money) and required under duress to serve the court—the authority of which he had repudiated when he signed the Declaration.

We find the first recorded use of the word "declaration" outside of Mecklenburg in the diaries and records of the Moravian church at Salem—now the city of Winston-Salem.

On page 876, Vol. II, of the year 1775 records of the church appears the following notation:

"June 24, 1775—some time during this month the Brethren heard that the men of Mecklenburg county had unseated all their justices and put Selectmen in their places."

The above extract from the Moravian records was followed by another, dated June 27, 1775:

"In Mecklenburg county, where they have unseated all magistrates and put Selectmen in their places, they are threatening the people, and us in particular, to sign a DECLARATION stating that we hold with the King or Boston, but we think for the present they are threats. If a higher authority should ask such a declaration of us, we think we will follow the form of a declaration suggested by the Continental Congress—"Hold to the King, but fight his officers."

(This plan could not be well called treason.)

Here is the first use of the word "declaration" just five weeks after the document was signed on May 20th.

These references to the situation in Mecklenburg are followed in the Moravian records by another under the date of July 7th, 1775, which reads as follows:

"This afternoon a man from Mecklenburg, who had been sent Express from there to the Congress in Philadel-

phia, and was now returning, brought a circular, addressed to Mr. Traugot Bagge; it was signed by Hooper, Hewes and Caswell and contained encouragement to take up arms, etc.”

This “Man from Mecklenburg” is admitted by all to have been Captain James Jack who had carried the Declaration to Philadelphia¹; but our delegates had been too timid to place it before the convention, for, according to the Moravian records, they had decided the time was “immature.”

Further proof the authenticity of the Declaration is the set of 22 instructions prepared by John McKnitt Alexander for the Mecklenburg delegates elected to the state convention, sometimes called the “People’s Congress,” at Halifax in April 1776. In the initial instruction he stated “North Carolina is . . . a free and independent State . . .” Would he have made this statement had not the Declaration previously been adopted? What would have been his authority for this assertion had there not been a Declaration? How else could North Carolina have been liberated from the English yoke? No other part of the state or nation had undertaken this step.

In his diary for December, 1775, Moravian Brother Traugot Bagge, summarizing the events noted above, wrote; “At the close of the year 1775, I cannot omit to mention that in the summer of this year—that is May, June or July—the county of Mecklenburg in North Carolina declared itself free and independent of England and made such arrangements for the administration of the laws among them as the Continental Congress made for the whole country.”

This indisputable information concerning the Declaration can be found in Vol. II, page 52, of the Moravian church records, translated from the original German by the church

¹There was no special reason for him to take the “Resolves” to Philadelphia except in confirmation of the Declaration.

archivist, Miss Adelaide L. Fries. In the preface to her monumental work, she stated:

"In 1912 when the records of the archivist were being moved from one room to another, I found a package wrapped in a newspaper . . . *The Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly*, No. 1717, of November 1, 1775, containing as its first article the proclamation of Governor Josiah Martin on August 8, 1775, which referred to the "infamous publication" in the *Cape Fear Mercury*, importing to be the 'resolves' of a set of people styling themselves a 'Committee for the County of Mecklenburg'."

The use of the word "declaration" can be found in the following quotation from a 200 line lampoon written in 1777, by the noted Mecklenburg lawyer, Adam Brevard, brother of the Ephraim Brevard, author of the Declaration:

"When Mecklenburg's fantastic rebels,
Renowned for censure, scold and gabble,
In Charlotte met in giddy council,
To lay the Constitution's ground sill,
By choosing men both learned and wise,
Who clearly could with half closed eyes
See millstones through or spy a plot
Whether existed such or not;
Who always at noon could define
Whether the sun or moon did shine
And by philosophy could tell whether
It was dark or sunny weather,
And sometimes, when their wits were nice,
Could well distinguish men from mice,
First to withdraw from British trust
In Congress, they the very first,
Their Independence did declare."

The national *Declaration of Independence* of July 4, 1776, however, so fully eclipsed the Mecklenburg Declaration that the latter was mentioned but occasionally during

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the next three or four decades; yet in 1809 an original treatise upon the Mecklenburg document was delivered during the graduation exercises at the old Sugar Creek Church Academy by a youth, James Wallis, Jr., son of the teacher, and the nephew of John McKnitt Alexander.

As the pyramids were constructed stone upon stone, so the evidence in support of the actuality of the Mecklenburg Declaration, even though the original was destroyed when John McKnitt Alexander's home burned in 1800, can be piled fact upon fact until it reaches the empyrean sky of John Milton's "Paradise Lost."

And now . . . may every one, and all the world, know of the works and lives of the first Mecklenburgians, who they were, whence they came and how they laid the foundation for our independence, our County, our great City . . . full of beauty and all good things.

CHARLES W. ALLISON, SR.
P. O. Box 412, Charlotte 1, N. C.

October 1, 1956

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER I

Ephraim Brevard

May 20, 1775, Mecklenburg rightly celebrate as one of the great days in American history, like Bunker Hill Day in Massachusetts, Constitution Day in California, Alamo Day in Texas, for it was on that date a delegation of pioneers of Mecklenburg county met in Charlotte and adopted their famous Declaration of Independence from England.

Among the most respected of the 27 signers of that immortal document was Dr. Ephraim Brevard, not solely because he was the first to sign that great instrument of human liberty and freedom, but for the additional reason history records the statement he was its author and the clerk of the convention at which it was adopted; also that he was one of Charlotte's first physicians and rather than wholly of Scotch-Irish ancestry (which settled the county) he was the grandson of a French Huguenot emigre.

His life was romantic, tragic, which was true of so many of our pioneers, but honorable, interesting and fateful.

Dr. Ephraim Brevard was not a native Mecklenburgian.

He was born in Cecil county, Md. The year on the best authority, was 1744; his place of birth, however, did not

in any manner temperate his intense belief in the political and religious freedom of his adopted county, but is it not sufficient for us that Ephraim Brevard was born and that circumstances brought him to Mecklenburg county?

The year of this important event was 1747; he was then only three years of age. His brother, Adam Brevard, once wrote their parents first stopped in Orange county; at least, for one year, then moved on to the community now embraced by the county of Iredell (organized 1778).

Mecklenburg was not formed as a county until 1762, so when the Brevards arrived here the surrounding country was a dense wilderness and inhabited only by Indians and various wild animals.

News of the fine lands that lay along the river now known as our own Catawba had some time previously reached Maryland and as a consequence several emigrants from that province made their way into this section.

Among the earliest settlers in what is now Iredell county was Alexander Osborne, founder of the notable Osborne families in Mecklenburg and Rowan counties; he had married Agnes McWhorter whose sister, Jane, became the wife of John Brevard—Ephraim's father—and it was they perhaps who induced the Brevards to cast their fortunes with them in this area.

Thomas Spratt is generally recognized as the first settler in what is now south Mecklenburg; he had come down from Pennsylvania and was soon followed by a young surveyor from Pennsylvania—Thomas Polk, who if not previously so soon met and became enamoured of the Spratt's daughter, Susanna, and in due course they were married.

Their first child was a daughter, called Martha, who became the wife of the subject of this sketch—Dr. Ephraim

Brevard, who had come to Charlotte about the year 1771 to practice his profession.

Dr. Brevard's father, as noted above, was John Brevard, later to become one of Rowan counties most prominent citizens and upon its formation as a county in 1753 he was appointed sheriff.

His wife was a daughter of the noted Dr. Hugh McWhorter of New Castle, Del., which lay across the river from the Brevard's home in Maryland, and traced their ancestry to certain martyred dissenters in England.

Their first child was Ephraim Brevard.

John Brevard also possessed an excellent heritage. His father was a native of France and had found it necessary to leave France because of his Protestantism. He first went to Ulster county in Ireland. "Words in the night" had led him to believe religious liberty could be found there. And at the time that was true, but when he finally reached Ireland the Established Church of England was in power.

Ulster was accordingly in a political and religious turmoil.

Among the friends the French emigre (his first name is not known) made in Ireland was a family by the name of McKnitt who had learned of the religious freedom permitted in Maryland and as it is recorded in history they invited the Brevard emigre to accompany them to America.

Realizing he could not return to France, and perhaps enamoured of the McKnitt's youthful daughter, he promptly accepted their invitation and soon thereafter they were on the high seas bound for America.

The McKnitts settled in Cecil county, Md., where the young couple was soon married.

John Brevard was their first child and when he had reached manhood's estate he married Jane McWhorter, sister of Agnes, already the wife of Alexander Osborne, and if not inspired by reports from the Osbornes upon the cli-

mate and fine soil of the Mecklenburg area, then as a companion for Agnes Osborne, the Brevards moved their growing family to North Carolina.

John and Jane Brevard had eight sons and all attained high prominence in their adopted county and seven of them served in the Revolutionary War.

They were not backwoodsmen in any manner, the Brevards or the Osbornes; but were rather educated, gentle folks, with an excellent background and a determination to make themselves responsible citizens of their adopted county.

Both John Brevard and Alexander Osborne appeared before the Provincial Assembly in the year 1750 and each obtained three grants of land.

The Collected Colonial Records show that John Brevard obtained three grants—one for 360 acres, another for 600 acres and one for 400 acres, for a total of 1,360 acres, all “located in Anson county.”

(Alexander Osborne also obtained three grants.)

These grants, however, while indicated as located in Anson county, actually lay in Iredell county, as known today, but are marked on General Joseph Graham’s map of this area in 1789 as within the bounds of Mecklenburg county.

When Ephraim Brevard was but a mere child he lost one eye while playing in the woods near his home; he nevertheless was later placed under the tutelage of a neighboring classical scholar, Crowfield Academy, and later sent to the grammar school in Prince Edward county, Va. From there he went on to Nassau Hall as the College of New Jersey was then called (now Princeton University.)

He was accompanied to Nassau Hall by his cousin, Adlai Osborne, who later became a prominent citizen in Rowan county (formed 1753).

Other Mecklenburgers who attended Nassau about that time were Waightstill Avery, David Reese and Hezekiah James Balch—all signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration.

Another signer, Waightstill Avery, was then an instructor at Nassau.

Ephraim Brevard later moved up to Philadelphia where he studied medicine under the noted Dr. David Ramsey who a year or two later moved to Somerset county, Md., and young Brevard accompanied him there as his assistant, but about 1771 he returned to Iredell. Soon thereafter he discovered Charlotte was a thriving village of five years of age and accordingly moved to Charlotte to practice his profession.

He had been well trained, educated in the classics, as was true of several Mecklenburgians of the day. He had been reared in the Presbyterian faith. The county had been settled almost exclusively by members of that faith; so he early attained a high place in the annals of his adopted county—politically and in education as in his profession and the church.

Capt. Thomas Polk, who had some years previously married Susannah Spratt, was at that time perhaps the most prominent citizen of the community and his daughter, Martha Polk, was then the village's most popular young lady and in due course she was married to Dr. Brevard.

"She died early in life," wrote Dr. J. B. Alexander in his history of early Mecklenburg, "and was interred in the Old Settlers cemetery on West 5th St."

Their only child was a daughter, called "Margaret" by some chroniclers of the period, but she was no doubt named in honor of her mother; for Dr. Brevard refers to her in his will as "my infant daughter, Martha."

Dr. Brevard's will devised his entire estate to Martha—then a mere child; he also provided his "orphan daughter" be allowed to remain "in the home where she now resides."

(The home was not indicated). His estate consisted for the most part of real estate lots on Tryon and Trade streets in Charlotte. (He was the first owner of the lot where Kress Dept. Store now stands, paying 3 pounds—shillings); he also provided his “worthy father-in-law, Thomas Polk,” should be the guardian of his “infant daughter, Martha,” jointly with his “trusted friend, John McKnitt Alexander, a brother, Alexander Brevard, and Rev. Thos. M. McColl,” all of whom were to act as executors of the estate.

Martha is said to have married Henry Dickerson of Camden, S. C., where following her mother’s death she may have resided with her uncle, Hon. Joseph Brevard—then a prominent lawyer there. Mr. Dickerson was an Englishman; he had entered America from Bermuda, but was naturalized in 1802; Martha, too, died early; they had one child, called Joseph Polk Dickerson, who as a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Mexican War of 1848-49 lost his life in the battle at Churubusco.

(Col. Dickson had married Emma Dyson, but they had no children.)

Another important event in the short life of Dr. Ephraim Brevard was his appointment as a trustee and instructor at the Queen’s Museum Academy.

The citizens of the community had observed the various ministers who had come into the county and established a number (7) of fine Presbyterian congregations had passed over on the western slope of life; that it would soon be necessary to replace them with young men. They accordingly decided to establish in Charlotte a classical school and seminary. In due course a petition was submitted the Provincial Legislature for a charter. The solons approved the petition, but when it was received by the King he ordered it revoked upon the belief it would only breed more dissenters and spread republicanism and the charter was denied.

The citizens ignored the king's order and purchased land at the corner of the present-day streets, Third and South Tryon, and erected a small building for the college they proposed to operate without a charter; Dr. Brevard was authorized to visit his maternal uncle, Dr. Alex McWhorter, in Maryland and offer him the post of headmaster.

Dr. McWhorter declined the offer. Later, the Legislature granted the college a charter, provided it would accept a minister of the Established Church as headmaster. This scheme, of course, would defeat the aim and purpose of the institution; so the offer was declined and the local citizens proceeded with the unchartered school.

Because of his educational advantages he was selected as clerk of the Declaration Convention on May 19th and was also appointed a member of the resolution committee, jointly with Rev. Hezekiah James Balch¹ and William Kennon², a lawyer, and as the world knows today the Declaration as composed by them was adopted.

Hostilities soon broke out in the Cross Creek or the Fayetteville section (February, 1776) when the Tories attempted to suppress the independent movement there; the Safety Committee of Mecklenburg ordered Capt. Thomas Polk to lead a regiment of militiamen to the patriots' assistance; Dr. Brevard had a student body of 21 young men in the college. All of them volunteered and with Dr. Brevard accompanied his father-in-law to Fayetteville.

After a march of 125 miles through the wilderness they arrived too late to participate in the battle — Moore's Creek bridge, near Wilmington, where the enemy was routed. Capt. Polk thereupon returned with his troops to Charlotte and Dr. Brevard again assumed his duties at the college which however was soon forced to close its doors because of the Revolution. With John McKnitt Alexander, he was

¹Ibid. Page 73.

²Ibid. Page 185.

again called upon to prepare a set of resolutions for the delegates Mecklenburg selected to represent the county in the State's organizational or constitutional convention at New Bern in 1777.

With North Carolina organized as a State, the Mecklenburgians again asked the General Assembly for a charter for its college which they called "Liberty Hall" instead of "Queen's College;" but the old name was the one more generally used and while a different organization operates a college in Charlotte it's still the name of the local institution.

Dr. Brevard was again made a trustee, but soon thereafter he entered the American army as a surgeon and was sent to the hospital at Charleston, S. C. The British eventually captured the city and Dr. Brevard was made a prisoner.

All of the prominent citizens were imprisoned in the fort at St. Augustine, Fla.

But Dr. Brevard was retained as a surgeon and treated not only the English, but American prisoners. His health finally failed, due to bad food and unsanitary conditions; he was then discharged and allowed to make his way back to Charlotte. The city was then in the hands of the enemy. He accordingly decided to seek a haven with his aged mother in Iredell county.

The route lay through Alexandrianna, (the community now called Croft), where his friend and compatriot, John McKnitt Alexander, resided; he stopped for a period with the Alexanders, but his disease had so disabled him further travel was beyond his strength. Dr. Wm. Read of the Southern American army was called to attend him, but his services were of no avail and the beloved Dr. Ephraim Brevard passed away in the Alexander home in July, 1781, age 37 years.

Early historians recorded the statement his body was brought back to Charlotte and interred beside his wife, Martha, in the old 5th street cemetery.

Brevard street in Charlotte was named in honor of this noble patriot and signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence.

REFERENCES:

This Signer's family line having expired with the death of his only grandson, the genealogical history was obtained for the most part from the Polk and Spratt family history; the sketch of his life by Lyman Draper, Dr. J. B. Alexander and earlier Mecklenburg chroniclers, the Courthouse records, the Signer's will, the Collected Colonial Records of North Carolina, particularly the laws and history of establishment of Queens College; my research covered a period of several months and consultation of all early records of Mecklenburg

Men trained in realities are an enemy to philosophic
indefiniteness.

—Saunders

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER II

Abraham Alexander

Mecklenburg, as a community, actually owes its very existence to royal tyranny and religious intolerance in the British Isles of 200 or more years ago; for in order to escape that form of inhumanity of man upon man, thousands upon thousands of men and women braved 3,000 miles of open sea and circuitous as may have been their route finally made their way to the dense wilderness now known as Mecklenburg and established themselves in a home where they could worship as pleased their conscience.

Foremost among the brave men and women who 200 years ago, made their way here in search of personal freedom and religious tolerance, and by their frugality, industry and perseverance carved out of the forest our present-day great city of Charlotte and county, were several members of the long notable Alexander clan.

Originally of Scotch ancestry, the Mecklenburg Alexanders first sought religious sanctuary in the Ulster area of Ireland. They discovered there, however, that the very earth had been measured off into one parish after another

by the Established Church. There was accordingly no room for them in Ulster. Hence, they joined up with other Dissenters or Covenanters, as the Presbyterians were then called, and with their own ministers, chartered ships and set sail for America.

The Alexanders first settled along the eastern seaboard, particularly in Somerset and Cecil counties, Maryland. Many of them later moved on to western Pennsylvania. There they encountered wild savages. They then moved southward into Virginia, but again met up with the autocratic standards of the Established Church. Then it was they finally found a haven deep in the wilderness now known as Mecklenburg county.

They were not fleeing from their native culture, form of government or established customs and manner of life, but rather from an out-moded form of religious worship.

They wished to read the Bible themselves and speak their own prayers.

Abraham Alexander, the subject of this sketch, who was later to become chairman of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence Convention on May 19-20, 1775, was a worthy descendant of the Alexander branch of the Scotch-Irish immigrants who had sought freedom of religion in America.

He was born December 9, 1717, in Cecil County, Md., son of Elias and Sophia Alexander. His paternal grandfather was Andrew Alexander. His mother was the daughter of Andrew's brother, Joseph Alexander, "the tanner," as he was generally called—one of the noted men of the county and a prominent layman in the Presbyterian church.

Elias, as it will appear, married his cousin which was often a custom among the various clans as they settled in the isolated sections of the new world.

Elias, Abraham's father, was born in Somerset County, Md., February 26, 1679.

Upon the death of his first wife, Sophia, Elias married a second time—to Ann Taylor. They had only one child. Elias preceded Ann in death. She then closed his estate probated in Frederick County, Md., 1747-48, and several of her step-children having moved to Mecklenburg she followed them to their new home.

Among Elias children then in Mecklenburg were: Abraham, (Arthur, died 1763) and Ezra, all of whom attained considerable prominence and later were glad to honor themselves as signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration.

Abraham started life as a cooper in Maryland. He was also married there. The year was 1749. His wife's maiden name is not definitely known, but it is believed she was Dorcas Wilson. Soon after Abraham's marriage, he moved to Mecklenburg. Where they first settled is not known, but upon their arrival here Mecklenburg was the westward extension of Anson county—formed in 1749. Wadesboro, 75 miles distant, was the county seat. Because of the great distance to the courthouse many land deeds in this area were not recorded; hence, it is difficult to locate their first home. No doubt Abraham had purchased land here before 1762—the year Mecklenburg was organized as a county, yet no deeds of that period can be found. They may have been recorded in Wadesboro, but the first courthouse there was destroyed by fire; later, after Mecklenburg was formed as a separate county some of the deeds were transferred to Charlotte, but no record of grants of land to Abraham are found until 1765.

(He may have “staked” off his first place of abode like many other earlier Mecklenburgians.)

They little realized perhaps the wilderness here was owned by any person, but the major portion of Mecklenburg had been granted to Lord Augustus Selwyn in 1735 following the province's return to the Crown by the Eight Lord Proprietors. He had appointed Henry McCullough, an

attorney of Wilmington, as his agent. When McCullough discovered Mecklenburg was being settled by "squatters" he endeavored to obtain deeds from them. Some of them declined out right to surrender their land. Other settlers claimed they were within the bounds of South Carolina.

McCullough finally decided to visit Mecklenburg with his surveyors and lay off the bounds of the claims and require the settlers to pay a certain sum; he reached Mecklenburg in the summer of 1765 and according to a lengthy report to Governor Tryon of his experiences here he first went to the "home of Capt. Abraham Alexander on Shugar Creek."

Much to his surprise, he discovered when he reached there about 150 settlers had congregated and refused to allow him to survey their lands. He was threatened with bodily harm, as he wrote the Governor. Subsequent circumstances indicated Abraham Alexander argued with the crowd that McCullough had a legal right to the land and perhaps he agreed to serve as one of his surveyors; in any event, whatever may have been the cause, Abraham was set upon by the settlers and severely mauled and injured.

McCullough finally found it advisable for him to slip away.

He then wrote his 10,000 word report to the governor. Warrants were issued for several of the settlers, but all sheriffs who visited the area discovered, too, it was best for them to make no efforts to serve the warrants.

The exact location of Abraham's home on Shugar creek, as stated by McCullough, is not known, but it is known he had a mill on what was called "Alexander's mill branch of Shugar Creek."

His first recorded land grant in the Charlotte courthouse is dated April 16, 1765, when he purchased through a Rowan county sheriff's sale 600 acres on Catawba river.

Perhaps for speculation, he later recorded the following deeds: 360 acres on Garrison's creek on January 15, 1766; 120 acres, July, 1767; 125 acres in October, 1767; 167 acres in September, 1785; 125 on Coddle creek, 1787.

The land purchased for his home site was evidently the 620 acres he obtained by grant from Lord Augustus Selwyn on Alexander's mill branch.

This land is now for the most part covered by the Charlotte Country Club. His home stood on a portion of the present-day golf course of the club and until the links were changed a few years ago the rock foundation of the old home ("Mansion House," as he called it in his will) could be seen above the ground.

The map of a survey of an addition of 125 acres to the plantation was made by the noted John McKnitt Alexander—one of Abraham's compatriots (they were cousins) and also a signer of the Declaration; this map shows the signature of John McK. and is still in the possession of Mrs. J. E. Steere, descendant of Abraham through his son, Joab.

These various land purchases offer ample proof of Abraham's industry and foresight which enabled him to build up a considerable fortune and a place of prominence in the affairs of his adopted county.

He had several near kin who were also as prominent and substantial citizens—William, Ezra, and Arthur, brothers; Adam and Charles, nephews, and John McKnitt and Hezekiah Alexander, cousins—all signers of the historic Mecklenburg Declaration, except Arthur, deceased, and all were active participants in the Revolutionary War that followed.

Abraham was from the first upon his arrival here active in the local, church and military affairs of the county; due to his age, however, he could not take to the field as a soldier of the line, although a lieutenant in the militia, but he was chairman of the county's Committee of Safety and served his county in many ways during the war; he re-

quired all citizens to carry a certificate of their political standing, signed by him, and during this period he served as a magistrate on the inferior court of the county.

His will is dated April 12, 1786 and on file today in the courthouse in Charlotte, listing his legatees as follows: Isaac, a son, one of the prominent citizens of the time, born January 13, 1750, married three times and died in Camden, S. C., where he practiced medicine for many years.

Elizabeth was his only daughter; she was born February 19, 1775; married Wm. Sample Alexander, son of Hezekiah; died October 20, 1826, age 70 years; Abraham, Jr., was born March 6, 1762, died March 11, 1829; he was first married to Margaret Harris and 2nd to Jane McCorkle; Nathaniel, born July 3, 1767, died Feb. 5, 1808; he married Jane Harris May 24, 1794; Joab, born Feb. 9, 1769; died March 21, 1828; he married Hannah Wallace; Ezra was born December 3, 1772, but no further record of him is known; Marcus, born June 6, 1766; died Oct. 23, 1795; Cyrus, born January 9, 1779, married Rebecca Arthur, and died March 20, 1797.

Abraham was a member of the Colonial General Assembly in 1769-77 and according to the Colonial Records he was very active in the affairs of the Assembly.

Mecklenburg settlers at the time were almost wholly Presbyterian. They objected to the rule of the royal governor that all marriages had to be performed by a minister of the Established Church; hence, as soon as Abraham reached the Assembly he sponsored a bill revoking this rule and that marriage might be performed by "regular assigned Presbyterian ministers."

The bill was passed and sent up to Governor Tryon who signed it reluctantly and forwarded it through channels to the Council of State which however declined to approve the bill.

Reared in an agricultural region rather than on the seaboard, Abraham obtained the approval of another law sponsored by him; he had discovered a major portion of the corn harvested in the province was being shipped to Europe; hence, he thereupon proposed a bill subjecting the control of shipment of grain out of the province to the general government.

His service in the Legislature exemplified his high standards of character; for it was entirely constructive and in proof of his high ideals he proposed a bill designed to outlaw all forms of "gaming" in the province and also since the Catawba river was a chief source of much of the food of the settlers he sponsored a bill designed to prevent destruction of fish in that stream.

When the session was over he declined to stand for re-election.

His name appears in the Collected Provincial records many times during the session of the General Assembly and covering many of his activities before and after the Revolution; he was one of the trustees of Queen's College; (closed during the war); also, a trustee of Liberty Hall which succeeded Queen's; his son, Isaac, was president of the institution and when the Legislature proposed to transfer it to Salisbury he was again named a trustee, but for some reason the institution failed to open there; Abraham was also a trustee for the establishment of Charlotte as the seat of government for Mecklenburg.

Full details upon the life of Abraham Alexander would constitute a volume within itself; it may be well therefore in conclusion to quote the epitaph on his tombstone:

"Let me die the death
Of the Righteous
And let my last end
Be like His."

Abraham died April 23, 1786 and his beloved wife, Dorcas, died May 28, 1800. Both were laid away in the old cemetery at the Sugaw Creek Presbyterian church on North Tryon street, where he was long an elder and one of the original founders.

REFERENCES:

Information for this sketch, particularly the genealogical history of Abraham Alexander, was furnished the author by Mrs. J. E. (Irene Johnston) Steere of Charlotte—a descendant of the Signer through his son, Joab; but the public life was obtained for the most part from the North Carolina Collected Records, his will, Courthouse records, church, land deeds and proven records of early Mecklenburgian historians.

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER III

Thomas Polk

Pioneer extraordinary that he was, the recorded facts of his life offer ample proof Thomas Polk was the most outstanding citizen of early Mecklenburg.

He not only signed the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, but as captain of the Committee of Safety he selected the names of the delegates and summonsed them to the convention in Charlotte on May 19-20, 1775, at which it was adopted; he participated in all of its deliberations and upon its adoption after the all-day-and-night session it has been chronicled he read the document from the exterior steps of the small courthouse which stood in the center of the present-day streets—Trade and Tryon, generally called “The Square.”

Thomas Polk thence forward, as well as during the 25 or more years prior to this memorable event, dedicated by his actions his life to the political independence, the military, governmental, religious, educational and economic development of his adopted county and city, both of which he did so much to establish.

He was born near Carlisle, Pa., but when a mere youth turned his back on his native province and made his way to the wilderness now known as Mecklenburg county.

He early engaged in local politics. So active had he become in the affairs of the community when Mecklenburg was formed as a county in November, 1762, he was appointed one of the commissioners to establish the government and its county seat, then called Charlottetown, and with the board of commissioners seated as a panel, called the County Court, he thus became one of the county's first judicial officers.

Thomas Polk was colonel of the county's militia at the opening of the Revolutionary War and soon afterwards the Continental Congress in session at Philadelphia commissioned him as colonel of the 4th North Carolina Battalion of the American army and ordered him to proceed with the procurement of necessary equipment for the troops for service in the North.

He was not only compelled to vouch for the payment of provisions, he often advanced personal funds to pay for the rations and supplies for his soldiers.¹

In April, 1777, he joined Washington's army in New Jersey and served through the winter at Valley Forge. He had attained such prominence and the confidence of the General that he was selected to head a detachment of infantrymen to go into Philadelphia with a number of wagons and take down the Liberty Bell over Independence Hall and secret it in a convenient place at Bethlehem, Pa.

(One can well imagine it was placed in the care of the Moravians who had established the town as a religious center.)

¹Vol. 14, Page 698, Col. Polk issued a draft in the sum of \$100,000 for supplies, stating he would be responsible for this sum, and sent it to Philadelphia by his son, Charles; evidently it was honored; for history does not record further reference to the transaction.

(This incident is related by Gerald B. Howard of Nashville, Tenn., descendant of Thomas Polk, and chairman of the National Polk Genealogical committee.)

(Capt. Charles Polk and Col. William Polk, sons of Col. Polk, were members of the battalion and later were injured in the battle at Germantown.)

On June 26, 1778, Col. Polk tendered his resignation as an officer in the Continental Army due to his displeasure over the appointment of a junior officer to a higher post, not with any special hatred, however, for in his letter of resignation (found several years after the war among General Washington's private papers), he stated:

“. . . I rejoice in the prosperity of my country and am willing on every occasion to labor for its advancements, but choose not to obtrude my services.”

Upon his return to Mecklenburg, Colonel Polk was appointed Brigadier General of the North Carolina militia.

The occasion for Thomas Polk's migration to Mecklenburg may have been a boyhood affair of the heart. He had seemingly been acquainted with the Thomas Spratt family in Pennsylvania; for soon after pioneer Spratt (said to have been Mecklenburg's first white settler) had settled here young Polk followed them and made his way direct to their home in south Mecklenburg and in due course married their daughter—Susannah.

Their children were: William, a Revolutionary War colonel, born 1759; Ezekiel, who died at sea; Charles, who married Hezekiah Alexander's daughter, Mary; Deborah no record known; Mary married David Brown; Margaret, who married Governor Nathaniel Alexander; James married -----Moore; Thomas, killed in the war; Martha, who married Dr. Ephraim Brevard, another Declaration signer.

While the origin of the Polk family in America is generally well known (General Polk's grand nephew, James Knox Polk, was elected president of the United States and

directed the war with Mexico 1848-49), it may be well to relate in part the genealogical history of this illustrious family.

We first find mention of the family in England with "Fulbert, the Saxon," but in the year 1440, according to the annals of the period, the name had been changed to "Pollock" and in that year one Robert de Pollock, son of John de Pollock, was presented by King James II with a large grant of land in the Donnegal area of "New Scotland"—a name the English royalty hoped to impose on Ireland.

This ancestor of Thomas Polk was later knighted as "Sir Robert de Pollock" and from his line came Sir Thomas de Pollock, II, who was succeeded by his son, Thomas, III, and another son, Robert Bruce—from whom Mecklenburg's Thomas Polk descended.

After service in Cromwell's army of the commonwealth and because of religious and political turmoil in Ireland, Robert Bruce Pollock emigrated to Maryland with a number of other Dissenters who had served in Cromwell's forces.

(Maryland had been granted to Lord Baltimore, who had named it after his queen, and in order to populate the province with English settlers, according to his promise, he offered political and religious freedom to all who would cross the sea and settled there; thus it was so many of North Carolina settlers first stopped in Maryland).

The Pollocks first settled in Somerset County, Md., about the year 1675 and there on the eastern shore Robert Bruce Pollock erected his home, called "White Hall," and it was there he lived until his death, presumably in 1702, as the public records date the probation of his will in June of that year.

Robert Bruce was married to Magdaline (Tasker) Porter, also born in Ireland in 1672; she died in Somerset

County, Md. Her will was probated there in June, 1726, and was signed by her under the name of "Magdaline Polk"—the first time on record of the change of the name of Pollock to "Polk."

Now called "Polk," their children, several of whom were born in Ireland, were: John, Robert (father of Ruth Polk who married David Reese—another Declaration signer), David, William, I, Ephraim, Ann, Martha and Joseph.

William Polk, I, first married Nancy Knox Owens; their children were: William Polk, II, Elizabeth and Charles. His second wife was: -----Gray, widow, and their children were: James, born 1719; David, born 1721, had two wives—Mary Clarke and Pheba Helms; Jane, born 1723.

William Polk, II, married Margaret Taylor in Carlisle, Pa., and had the following children: William, III, born 1725; was married twice, one of whom may have been a Miss Spratt; THOMAS, born 1730, subject of this sketch, married Susannah Spratt; Charles, born 1732, died 1821; Deborah, born 1733, died 1811, married Samuel McCleary (one child, died in infancy; Susannah, born 1735, died 1813, married Benjamin Alexander; John born 1739, died 1785 (?), married Eleanor Shelby; Margaret, born 1742; married Robert McKee; possibly a daughter, Mary (who may have been the wife of Ezra Alexander—another signer of the Declaration; Ezekiel, born 1747, married Mary Wilson and two other wives, one of who may have been Sophia Neely.

These early pioneers moved as a rule as a clan, often intermarried, cousin with cousin, and for one reason or another Wm., II, decided to leave Somerset.²

He first moved to Cecil County, Md., where many other Dissenters had located; soon thereafter, however, he and

²Probably because he did not approve of his father's marriage and it is thought asked for his inheritance and left home.

his family moved to Pennsylvania where other "Pollocks" had settled some time prior to the 1700s.

About this period in the life of Wm. II, the French and Indians were contesting with England for control of Western Pennsylvania. The English General Edward Braddock's forces (he was killed) were defeated at Ft. Duquesne (now Pittsburgh, Pa.) thus leaving the settlers exposed to Indian raids. Then it was Wm. II, and a great number of settlers in that area followed his son, Thomas, to the wilderness now known as Mecklenburg county.

Thomas Polk, as previously noted, was the first of Wm. II's, children to move to Mecklenburg, but if not to attend his marriage to Susannah Spratt the rest of the family decided to seek safety, new lands and religious freedom and emigrated to Mecklenburg about 1756.

Thomas Polk's activities in his adopted county were so numerous and so diversified to mention them in detail would constitute a whole volume; chronologically, it would be almost impossible after these 200 years to write a history of his life which incidentally has been so shamefully neglected; for he was not only Mecklenburg's first citizen, he was a state-wide champion of political freedom.

The land deeds in the Charlotte courthouse show he purchased many, many thousands of acres of land in the county, particularly along Sugaw Creek, now in Charlotte. He had no doubt obtained much land before the county was formed in 1762, but they are not recorded here. Wadesboro was then the county seat. Fire destroyed the courthouse there; hence the lands he purchased before 1763 are not known.

This writer checked 45 different land deeds since 1763. Too numerous to list here, they nevertheless constituted approximately 15,000 acres. Then, following the Revolutionary War, he purchased out right many warrants the

State government issued to thousands of its soldiers in Tennessee, then called the "Western District.

Thomas Polk, called General Polk after the Revolution, had amassed a considerable fortune and to preserve for his heirs the warrant land deeds in Tennessee he and his stalwart sons, armed to the teeth for Indians, made their way over the mountains, located and surveyed the lands.

He had been reared as a surveyor and practiced the trade in Mecklenburg during the first years of his life here; in fact, he had participated in the survey of the site of the city of Charlotte and had been engaged by the Colonial governor to survey the line between Mecklenburg and South Carolina.

He also rendered considerable military service to South Carolina; for in the year 1776 when the Tories in the western portion of that province took the field against the local patriots he was called upon to head four companies of militia and joined Generals Dixon, Graham and Rutherford and in the vicinity of the present uniquely named town of "Ninety-Six" they met and defeated the enemy. Later, he was ordered to go to the siege of Charleston, but Cornwallis had taken the city before the Mecklenburg troops could reach Charleston.

Some few years before the town of Charlotte was established Gen. Polk had purchased considerable land in the vicinity of the "cross roads," as the intersection of the present-day named streets, "Trade and Tryon," were called.

The Legislature did not specify in its enabling act the exact location for the town of Charlotte; hence, when the time had come for the location of the courthouse several land owners in the eastern part of the county moved to locate the county seat on Rocky River.

Because the first county courts had been held in the home of his father-in-law, Thomas Spratt, on the present named East Fourth Street in the 2400 block, Thomas Polk

and a few of his associates wished to place the courthouse at the cross-roads; they, accordingly, as a coup d'etat, pooled their interests and erected a courthouse at that point and so informed the General Assembly which held when the Rocky river site was proposed that since a courthouse had already been erected the bill should be denied.

And thus it was the city of Charlotte obtained its present location, due almost wholly to the efforts of General Thomas Polk, but it has not even named a street or erected a statue in his honor.

General Polk continued to serve his county and state following his resignation from the Continental Army in 1778; also his sons, one of whom—Thomas, was killed in the battle at Eutaw Springs.

He was appointed to the North Carolina Board of War Commission and served as head of the commissary department; he aided in the procurement of supplies and laboured unfailingly for the welfare of the county throughout the war. He was a member of the Provincial Assembly as early as 1769; he was a trustee of the first college established in Charlotte and as a member of the Board of Trustees purchased the land at So. Tryon and 4th Streets for the site of the college; then, after it was discontinued due to the War, and later when its name was changed to Liberty Hall Academy he signed the deed transferring the land to the new school and served as a member of its board.

His home and plantation was ransacked by the British and for a time he found it necessary to seek new quarters to avoid capture; he owned several grist mills and a store in Charlotte and with his lots on Trade and Tryon streets and his thousands of acres of land he left a large fortune for his heirs.

The only recorded personal knowledge the world has of General Polk is found in the book of "Revolutionary War Incidents and Anecdotes and Remembrances" by Dr.

Joseph Johnson of Charleston, S. C., who stated, in part, as follows:

"In the Fall of 1782 when a child I remained two or three months in Charlotte with my father's family; I remember to have seen General Polk and his four sons repeatedly. The General was plain and unassuming, more like a farmer or miller, than a general . . ."

Dr. Johnson writes at length concerning the labours of General Polk and states two of his sons—Charles and James, moved to Sumter, S. C., where they resided until their death.

(Charles, incidentally, was then a widower, having previously married Mary Alexander, daughter of the noted Hezekiah Alexander.

The General's daughter, Martha, as is well known here, married one of Charlotte's first physicians, Dr. Ephraim Brevard, clerk of the Declaration convention and generally recognized as author of the Declaration.

Another daughter, Margaret, married Mecklenburg's first native governor of the State, Nathaniel Alexander, son of the pioneer, Moses Alexander, both of whose tombs may be seen in the Old Settlers Cemetery on West 5th St.

Odd in a sense, if he made a will, the General's will was not filed in Mecklenburg county or at Raleigh; it has been thought however he had almost wholly divided his estate among his heirs before his demise.

He passed away in 1793 and with his wife, Susannah, was buried in the Old Settlers Cemetery on West 5th Street.

REFERENCES:

Information for this sketch was furnished for the most part by Mrs. Bonnie Petteway and the Polk National Genealogical Association, Inc., of Nashville, Tenn.; also the courthouse records, the Collected Colonial Records of North Carolina; Dr. J. B. Alexander's "History of Mecklenburg county," Dr. Joseph Johnson's "Revolutionary War Anecdotes and Remembrances," published in Knoxville, Tenn., 1850.

Man is explicable by nothing less than his history.
—Emerson

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER IV

Henry Downs

By MISS MINNIE DOWNS

(Descendant of this signer through his son, Thomas Downs).

The material items concerning the life and times of Henry Downs, one of the twenty-seven signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, have become tinged with age—they are crumbling fast and are so faded that they will soon become illegible.

This writer, however—one of the fifth generation of descendants of this Signer, is glad of the opportunity to restore as much as possible the life and color of this noble patriot who truly needs no pen or brush to adorn his memory.

Time of course disintegrates scrolls and stones, but with its immutable, indelible stroke the pen can ever “echo from soul to soul” the memory of one who dared to think and act; therefore, let us inscribe within our hearts the memory of these noble men and so pattern our own lives.

Pioneer extraordinary that he was, Henry Downs was born in Virginia. The date was May 5, 1728. When he was

24 years of age (1752) he was married to Frances Tew, a Virginia young lady of distinction who numbered among her kin the fourth president of the United States—James Madison.

Some few years after their marriage Henry and Frances Tew Downs moved to Mecklenburg county—then a mere wilderness, and settled in the present day Providence township so fully dotted today with its palatial homes and landed estates.

Frances Downs, too, was imbued with the spirit of adventure and a deep love of human freedom and religious tolerance, and it has been said her devotion, fearlessness amidst the wilds of the county, her love of children and home, materially aided Henry Downs in his high attainments in his adopted county.

Tradition has it she also possessed a sincere loyalty for her adopted county and stood valiantly with her husband when he turned his back on royal tyranny and signed the Mecklenburg Declaration.

They presented Mecklenburg with two stalwart sons—Thomas and Samuel, and one daughter, Caroline, who married John Robinson—another early settler in Providence township.

Another son, Larkin, died in early childhood).

Henry Downs was trained as a surveyor. While yet young he had acquired considerable property in a section of Virginia knowns as the "Cow Pasture." His name is first recorded there in 1758 when he sold his farm of 300 acres in Augusta county to Joseph Lewis.

Henry was then only thirty years of age. Upon the sale of his farm it is believed he and his young wife emigrated to Mecklenburg, for in 1760 as recorded in the Collected Colonial records he furnished the province with a team and wagon for use in the military expedition against the Cherokee Indians in the western mountains.

Thomas Lewis, the surveyor in charge of the surveying party laying down the boundaries of the famous Lord Halifax grant in Virginia, referred to him as "Captain" Downs, indicating perhaps if not a member of the provincial militia before he moved to Mecklenburg he had participated in some of the expeditions against the "murderous Indians" in western Pennsylvania—more probably the latter, since family tradition indicated he had in early life moved from his father's home in Pennsylvania.

Earliest choniclers state Henry Downs was one of the flock that followed the noted pioneer Presbyterian preacher,¹ Alexander Craighead, from the Cow Pasture county in Virginia to Mecklenburg. Oddly named that it was, that section lay in Augusta county. The name of the church there was "Windy Cove." In any event, Henry Downs was no doubt a God-fearng man; for soon after his arrival in Mecklenburg county he joined with a number of other loyal Presbyterians and from the congregation they formed or organized in 1765 the present-day beautiful Providence Presbyterian church eight miles south of Charlotte.

(This was one of the seven Presbyterian churches organized by Rev. Alexander Craighead—Sugar Creek, Rocky River, Hopewell, Centre, Steele Creek, Poplar Tent and Providence).

Sunday in those faraway days—even in the wilderness—was still Sunday; for according to a note in the journal of Joseph Lewis, it was recorded Henry Downs was called before the Session of his church and charged with breaking the Sabbath by traveling with a team of horses to Shennandoah.

Except in the records of Humphrey Hunter, the name of Henry Downs is listed in all records relative to the delegates who attended the Mecklenburg Declaration convention in Charlotte but it is also carved in bronze upon the great

granite shaft erected to the memory of the Signers by the Mecklenburg Citizen's Committee on the plaza of the courthouse.

Old Mecklenburg records indicate Henry Downs' first place of abode here was in the "19th District." He was appointed one of the magistrates of the newly organized county (1762) and his district was called the "19th." His name first appears in the land deeds records of the county in 1768 when he purchased a tract of land on Four-Mile Creek from Lord Augustus Selwyn. This tract may have been the site of his original home. But the deed was not recorded in the courthouse at Charlotte. He paid the magnificent sum of 22 pounds English sterling money for the tract.

This tract adjoined the lands of Moses Craig, Samuel Nelson and James Way and while it was first bequeathed to his son, Thomas, it is still held by his descendants and is located four miles from Province church.

Mecklenburg was not formed as a county until November, 1762; hence, the deed may have been recorded at Wadesboro, county seat for Anson county, of which Mecklenburg was formerly a part.

Because of the frugality, thrift and good judgment, Henry Downs and Frances Downs continued to increase their land holdings, slaves and other property; for according to the land deed in the courthouse, they acquired by a grant from the State of North Carolina in 1795 another tract in the same area which contained 500 acres.

When Henry Downs passed away on October 8, 1798, he resided in a small house across the lane from the present-day two-story house occupied by this descendant. The land is owned by W. R. Downs. The writer owns the original grant. The home place is also occupied by this descendant's nephew who has a 7th generation offspring.

Good sense manages its own possessions, but it does not always increase them; yet an active mind, ambition and adventure in its widest sense aspires to go forward and that was a trait distinguishable in the life of Henry Downs by his material goals and the high place he attained in the affairs of his adopted county.

He was often called upon by his neighbors to survey or appraise their lands; he served as the administrator of estates and in 1777-78 he was the tax assessor for Providence township and later served as overseer of the indigent people of the county.

He reared his sons to follow in his footsteps as a reliable and helpful neighbor and citizen.

(His son, Samuel, served as one of the executors of the estate of Archibald Crockett, grandfather of the more noted David Crockett.)

Both sons, Thomas and Samuel, together with their brother-in-law John Robinson, were appointed executors of the will of Henry Downs which disclosed a landed estate of 810 acres in the immediate neighborhood of his original home in Providence township.

Because of his profession, surveying, he was no doubt chosen as one of the Town Commissioners when the Legislature provided for the establishment of "Charlottetown" as the seat of government for Mecklenburg county.

Still possessed of the land bequeathed him by his father, Thomas Downs, when he passed away in 1839, appointed John Sharp and Anziel Sharp executors of his will which mentioned as his heirs the following children: Margaret Wilie and Frances Griffith who with their descendants were long prominent in the affairs of Charlotte and Mecklenburg; Jonathan, whose descendants also still occupy the land granted by George III.

His daughter, Caroline, married a prosperous planter in Alabama—John Cunningham, but returned to Mecklenburg on visits within the memory of this writer.

These facts culled from many sources—land deeds, wills, Colonial Records, family tradition and the histories of Mecklenburg by Alexander, Foote and Hunter offer ample proof Henry Downs was a man of integrity and honor throughout his long life. When he passed away in 1798, he was laid away beside his wife, Frances Tew Downs, in the Providence Church cemetery which he had laboured so earnestly to organize and supported with personal funds.

(Frances Tew Downs passed away October 3, 1784.)

Henry Downs' way of life commends to his descendants, piety and patriotism, domesticity, respect for learning and independence, and true to the way pointed by him many, many of them have been found at the front in all of America's wars, on sea as well as land, and in the air during the World Wars I, II and the Korean conflict, and today these same men and women are carrying on usefully in civic life.

REFERENCES

Family records, land deeds, wills Henry and Thomas Downs and North Carolina Collected Colonial records.

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER V

Matthew McClure

By Mrs. George J. Mitchell (Nee Annie Griffin) Descendant of this Signer through his daughter Jane, and her husband, William Kerns.

The inner conflicts and outside forces which inspired the early colonial settlers to forsake their native land and seek a new home in a virgin territory were many.

Whatever the inner conflicts may have been they cannot be adequately assessed after these 200 years, but certainly the individual who resolved these conflicts by migration to a new land did not lack in boldness, self-reliance or independence. The outside forces whether political, religious, financial or otherwise are well known in the cases of individual colonies. The Mayflower story familiar to every grade student or Oglethorpe's followers in Georgia are illustrative of these motives.

Many of the early settlers who migrated to the County of Mecklenburg in North Carolina were peculiarly endowed with these qualities of boldness, self-reliance and independence; so, when their liberties were threatened, they

made known their protest in the now famous document known as the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence.

Among the Signers of this Declaration which did so much to shape the destiny of this region and the nation was Matthew McClure who arrived in Mecklenburg with his wife, Jennett, sometime prior to 1765.

The origin of the name McClure has frequently been discussed in the genealogical literature of Great Britain. The name variously spelled McClure, McCluer, McClewer, MacLure, McLewer and McLuir, comes from the Gaelic word "MacLobhair," pronounced MacLour.

Among the early families to emigrate from Scotland to Ireland (1608), were three families of McClures—supposedly brothers. They were from Ayrshire, Scotland. They crossed over the channel to Ireland in order to escape the period of Coventry there. When they arrived in Ireland it was comparatively quiet. Persecution came again, however, under James II, and later in the reign of Anne (1702-1714) under the Test Act. They thus became exceedingly unhappy and again decided to seek a new land which luckily was America.

Emigration about this time was taking place so rapidly the government became concerned over the exodus and attempted to halt the movement. This proved only temporary. In 1728 it began anew and from 1750 it is estimated that 12,000 came annually from Ulster to America. Among these early arrivals in America were the McClures. Landing first in Pennsylvania, some of them soon decided to push southward and were among the early settlers in the upper valley of Virginia and later some of them came into the Carolinas.

It is generally agreed that the McClure family have not preserved their genealogies. At this late date much difficulty is experienced in establishing connections in the

earliest families and certainly it would be most difficult to determine the place and date of their origin in Scotland.

Matthew McClure was born near Raphoe, Donegal County, North Ireland, about 1725, the son of Finley and Mary Morrison McClure. Finley came to America, bringing his family prior to 1739. He first stopped in Pennsylvania.

We next find Finley and his family settled in a portion of Orange County, Virginia, which in 1740 became Augusta County, Virginia. The Orange records show that he purchased 440 acres of land on February 28, 1739.

This land was a part of "Beverly Manor" and "in 1749 Robert Alexander, a Master of Arts of Dublin University, built on land owned by Finley McClure, Augusta County, Virginia, the log school-house, sowing the seed of learning, of which Washington and Lee University is the ripened fruit."

Finley's name in 1742 appears on the muster roll of Captain John Christian's Militia Company which was from Augusta County, Virginia, and Finley was listed third in a list of seventy-six.

The Augusta County records reveal several transfers of land by Finley McClure, but the last mention of him in Augusta County, Virginia, was in 1758 when he witnessed a deed for John Tate.

Matthew McClure was last shown as a resident of Augusta County in September, 1761, when he was listed as an appraiser of the estate of Robert Houston. The next record we have of his business transactions was when he purchased a tract of land in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, in 1765.

What incentive Matthew had for coming South is not known. However, we know that he had a brother, William an uncle, Andrew Morrison, as well as the family of his deceased brother, James, and his widow Mary Gaston Mc-

Clure living in South Carolina prior to the Revolutionary War.

The fact might be mentioned here that four sons of James and Mary Gaston McClure played an important part in the Revolutionary War. Captain John McClure, wounded at Hanging Rock, South Carolina, August 6th, 1780, died in Liberty Hall, Charlotte, North Carolina August 18, 1780—a son of this freedom loving couple.

Little is known of Matthew's life in Ireland. We know nothing of the origin of his wife, except that her name was Jenette and that after her marriage to Matthew McClure this courageous woman endured with him all the hardships of the colonies.

This area was little more than a wilderness as late as 1770 as evidenced by a map compiled by John Collett in 1770 for King George III of England.

They settled on a site to the rear of the present Mecklenburg Sanitorium about fifteen miles north of Charlotte on the highway leading to Statesville, now known as U. S. No. 21, and at the head-waters of McDowell's Creek this energetic, freedom-loving couple constructed a home of hand-hewn timbers cut from the surrounding forest.

Shortly after the completion of their home the McClures erected a grist mill to supply flour and other cereals necessary for their family and near-by settlers. Life here was full of hardships and privations which would appear almost unbearable in the present modern day; however, they were endured and here it was this courageous couple raised their family of seven children and spent their remaining years. The children were three sons—Thomas, William and Joseph and four daughters—Sarah, Martha, Jane and Elizabeth (Betsy).

Thomas married Mary Gissiah Morehead in 1790. William married Elizabeth Crockett February 13, 1804. Sarah married John Henderson. Martha married Hugh Houston.

Elizabeth (Betsy) married Samuel Harris March 21, 1796. Jane married George Houston and following his death she married William Kerns in 1798. This writer descended through this union. It is not known whether or not Joseph ever married.

Early records indicate that Matthew McClure was an Elder in Hopewell Presbyterian Church in 1765. Thus it was as a leader in his community and a captain in one of the militia companies that Matthew McClure was chosen as a delegate to the Declaration Convention to be held at the county seat in Charlotte, North Carolina, on May 19th, 1775.

After a day and night of earnest deliberation over the wording of the document he became on May 20th, 1775, a Signer of that immortal Proclamation, the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence—an act that was an honor to himself and a glorious heritage he thus bequeathed to his descendants.

It is easy to visualize this stalwart citizen as he had his favorite riding horse made ready for his trip to the village of Charlotte on that eventful May morning to take his seat as a chosen delegate to the Convention meeting on that day. The men who signed the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence were not unmindful of the grave responsibilities they assumed. It was not a rash act on their part. Even though they were unskilled in the art of craft that controls cabinets and govern empires, they came of a people endowed by an All-Providence to overcome obstacles and grapple with dangers that threatened the freedom of their community.

By their fearless act on May 20th, 1775, these Scotch-Irish Presbyterians of Mecklenburg were the first public voice raised in America dissolving all connection with one of the most powerful governments of the world.

Although Matthew McClure was too old to serve actively in the field as a soldier, he proved himself a true patriot during the ensuing hostilities by serving in other valuable capacities with all the zeal and loyalty he possessed. For a period of five months he served as a steward in the General Hospital, Charleston, South Carolina and as a Civil Officer and a Justice of the Peace he with other magistrates seated as a panel was a member of the County Court. His home, too, served as a rendezvous for many of the patriots of the community.

Ample proof of Matthew McClure's loyalty and devotion to the cause of freedom is further indicated by the following quotation from the Book of Certificate, Historical Commission, at Raleigh, North Carolina, "The Honorable Greene, having by his letter, addressed to His Excellency, Governor Martin, of North Carolina, dated Headquarters, May 7th, 1782, requested he should order the Auditor of the State, to audit the accounts of Matthew McClure of Mecklenburg County, who had procured a large quantity of provisions and sundry supplies, etc."

Colonial Records of North Carolina reveal that "at a meeting of the House on December 11th, 1786, a bill was presented showing that Matthew McClure had advanced 733 English pounds of his personal money for the purpose of purchasing necessities for use of the sick and wounded soldiers in the Continental Hospital in Charlotte, North Carolina, by order of General Greene."

The record continues: "The Comptroller agreed that such a personal loan showed a strong mark of benevolence to his country as well as to his fellow creatures in distress and at a meeting of the General Assembly in 1789 the Comptroller was authorized to liquidate the said debt, Signed, Franc's Childs."

Thomas, the eldest son of Matthew McClure, volunteered as a soldier in the Revolutionary War on the 15th of April,

1780, he was sixteen years old. He was assigned to a company of 200 in Mecklenburg County commanded by Captain James Staggart. This was at the time of the battle of Ram-suers Mill and his company was immediately ordered there and arrived about one hour after the battle ended. They were then ordered to stand guard over the prisoners.

The writer has in her possession a copy of quite a lengthy affidavit made by Thomas McClure on October 15th, 1832, listing much of his service which took place in North and South Carolina. In it he states that he did much hard fighting around Charlotte in that year. Along with his two brothers-in-law, George and Hugh Houston, he was among the fourteen brave men under the able leadership of Captain James Thompson who took part in the skirmish at the McIntyre's Farm on the Beatty's Ford Road. There on October 3rd, 1780, these men withstood an attack from 400 of General Lord Cornwallis's "British Redcoats."

Matthew McClure in addition to his many activities prior to and during the Revolution was active in other public affairs of his day. He was associated with the enigma concerning the selection of the site of Charlotte, North Carolina, as the seat of local government.

There are two land deeds on record in the Mecklenburg County courthouse indicating that two tracts of land were purchased for the site of the town. Matthew McClure signed one of these as a witness. This document was dated January 15th, 1769. The other witness was Joseph Sample. The purchase price was "ninety pounds proclamation money." In this transaction, Henry McCulloh acted as Agent for Lord Augustus Selwyn. The number of acres involved was 350. When the town was laid out Matthew McClure was one of the surveyors.

Because the establishment of Mecklenburg County did not take place until 1762, we have no records in the local courthouse of the land purchased by the early settlers. The

first record of Matthew McClure purchasing land in Mecklenburg was a deed recorded for 280 acres "On the fifth day of May in the fifth year of the reign of our Sovereign King George III by the Grace of God, Great Britain, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, in the year of our Lord, 1765, between Henry McCulloh of Chowan, Province of North Carolina, and Matthew McClure of Mecklenburg county of the same Province of the other part. Purchase price eighteen pounds Sterling money of Great Britain."

This tract of land was designated as lying along McDowell Creek in upper Mecklenburg county. From the year 1765 he had many transactions of buying and selling of land. The land deed records indicate that he owned several thousand acres of land in Mecklenburg. Much of this land lay along McDowell and Garr Creeks and portions of it are still in possession of his descendants, including the writer of this sketch. This land has been handed down from generation to generation. One particular tract was a State Grant purchased from the Board of Trustees of the University of North Carolina through their Attorney, Adlai Osborne, in the year 1799 which contained 630 acres.

One interesting record in the Mecklenburg Courthouse of a sale of land by Matthew McClure to Samuel McCombs, reads as follows "one half acre of land on Tryon Street in the town of Charlotte in the year 1790, the tracts contains six poles front, 12 poles back, with all the trees, woods, and water-ways."

Other sales and purchases too numerous to mention here attest to the energy and business capacity of this Signer during his long life in Mecklenburg. It is interesting to note another facet in the versatility of this Signer. He early recognized the value of wildlife conservation, as records in the Mecklenburg courthouse reveal that he posted his land as a deer refuge in the year 1793.

His wife Jenette preceded him in death. She died July 15th, 1782. Matthew remained active until his death twenty-three years later. He died on February 28th, 1805. Today, so far as is known, he lies buried in an unmarked grave in the pre-Revolutionary cemetery of Hopewell Presbyterian Church yard, the church he was affiliated with over the long years of his life in Mecklenburg County.

The last will and testament of Matthew McClure is recorded in the Mecklenburg courthouse in Book E, page 4, dated May 4th, 1804. Much of his land had previously been given to his children. In his will he designated cash legacies totaling \$5,050 to his children, grandchildren, and two nephews. "The remainder of my estate to be divided equally among my children, the amount \$5,100. To my son William, I bequeath 800 acres of land in the tract in the State of Tennessee on the waters of the Elk river. The remaining 200 acres of this tract to my grandson, Matthew McClure, son of William. This land is by virtue of Grant etc."

"I hereby name my two sons-in-law, Samuel Harris and William Kerns, and my devoted friend, Dr. Joseph McKnitt Alexander, as my executors."

The will was witnessed by William B. Alexander, Dr. Joseph McKnitt Alexander, and John McKnitt Alexander.

In the year 1954, descendants of Matthew McClure provided necessary funds to have his name inscribed on a bronze plaque, along with four other Signers. This plaque was placed in the vestibule of Hopewell Presbyterian Church under the auspices of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution. Several of Matthew McClure's descendants are members of this Chapter.

This plaque was unveiled on May 20th, 1954, by Linda Threatt, a granddaughter of Matthew McClure. She is of the eighth generation.

To attest to his spirit and those of the other Signers who still live in our hearts, these words are fitting.

“And these dauntless statesmen, in ringing words on high,
Declared their independence, We’ll win it or we will die:
With lives and sacred honor, with fortunes great and small,
We’ll serve the cause of freedom, We’ll break the Briton’s
thrall.”

REFERENCES:

Matthew McClure’s will, land deeds in Mecklenburg courthouse, Foote’s History of Mecklenburg County, Tompkin’s History of Mecklenburg, Colonial Records of North Carolina, Book of Certificate of North Carolina Historical Commission, Matthew McClure’s family Bible published in Scotland 1772, this Bible is now in the possession of William Kerns, Greenville, South Carolina. He is a grandson of the sixth generation; and the McClure family history by Dr. James Alexander McClure.

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER VI

John McKnitt Alexander

John McKnitt Alexander, signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, and secretary of the convention at which it was adopted, started life as a tailor — not plying his needle, however, on beautiful serges or worsteds or synthetic fabrics of today, but rather he used homespun cloths and made knee-breeches and fancy waistcoats and leather breeches for the backwood settlers.

When he died on July 10, 1817, in the 85th year of his age, he was not only one of the largest land owners, but one of the most honored citizens of his adopted county.

He was perhaps the best known of the 27 signers of the Declaration and had it not been for the sectional prejudice of the eastern counties of the province he might otherwise have had the distinctive honor of signing both the Mecklenburg Declaration and the National Declaration of July 4, 1776; for, according to Hon. William L. Saunders, compiler of the colonial records of North Carolina, his name was mentioned in the Provincial Congress as a delegate to

attend the Continental Congress at Philadelphia as representative of the western part of our State.

He was born in Cecil county, Maryland, in 1733. His father was James Alexander—progenitor of a number of noted Alexanders. Among them was John McKnitt's older brother, Hezekiah—another Declaration signer.

John McKnitt Alexander also had the following brothers and sisters: Theophilus, born May 18, 1716; Edith, born January 10, 1718; Kissiah, born May 9, 1720; Amos, born January 13, 1722; Ezeikel, born June 17, 1724; Jemima, born January 9, 1727; Ester, born-----; Margaret, born June 6, 1736.

Unwilling to change his residence, James Alexander remained in Maryland, despite the prominence attained by his sons in Mecklenburg, and upon the death of his first wife, Margaret McKnitt Alexander, daughter of a prominent dissenter who had come over from Scotland with the Alexanders, he married Abigail----, and from this union came five other children: Elizabeth, born November 17, 1746; Abigail, born May 5, 1748; Margaret, born April 30, 1750; Joseph, born August 3, 1752; Ezeikel, born October 21, 1754, who perhaps may have been so named upon the death of Margaret's Ezeikel.

J. McKnitt, as he so often abbreviated his name, moved to Mecklenburg about the year 1754 with his brother, Hezekiah, and sister, Jemima Alexander Sharpe, along with a number of friends and other relatives.¹ They settled in the present-day Hopewell section of the county. Charlotte had not then been established. The county was not even formed until 1762. But at that time or within a few years it was dotted with a number of widely-scattered communities, each centered by a Presbyterian Church. Most of the com-

munities, too, had a small school, taught as a rule by the minister or a scholarly layman. There were no towns nearer than Salisbury or Wadesboro. They, however, were mere hamlets; hence, their main trade centers were Charleston and Philadelphia by wagon trains.

John McKnitt's nephew, William Alexander, son of Hezekiah, operated one of the wagon trains between Charlotte and Philadelphia. He would take orders for any conceivable article the settlers and their women folk wished. He would also haul to Philadelphia the pelts of the animals they killed at home or in the forests and other products of the farm and forests.

(William's diary or order book during the years of the Revolution present an excellent picture of the hardships "enjoyed" by these people of the backwoods, cultured and refined that they were for the period, and is one of the prized possessions of Charlotte's noted antiquarian — Osmond L. Barringer.)

How long John McKnitt applied his trade as a tailor here is not known. He apparently soon abandoned it, however, in favor of the trade of surveyor. This trade offered him opportunity to observe and appraise the value of land and that buying and selling land was in a financial way more lucrative than the tailor's trade. Thus it was he began to acquire one tract of land after another and within a few years he had purchased several thousand acres of land in this area.

Because Mecklenburg was not set off from Anson county until 1762, it is not known what land he purchased prior to that year. Wadesboro was the county seat 75 miles away; hence, most deeds were not registered and perhaps many were lost when the courthouse was burned. The first land deed he recorded in Mecklenburg bears the date of October 5, 1764. On that date he purchased 300 acres on Allison's creek; also 120 acres on Beaver Dam creek.

(The location of these creeks are not known today, except an "Allison's creek" empties into the Catawba river in South Carolina near Rock Hill—once considered a part of Mecklenburg county.)

On November 16, 1764, he purchased 131 acres from the provincial governor, Arthur Dobbs, and his wife, Justina Dobbs, on Rocky River—now in Cabarrus county.

(Governor Dobbs had in the year ____ obtained a grant of 50,000 acres in Mecklenburg county area from the King and with Lord Augustus Selwyn, heir of George Selwyn, Esq., of Kent, England, owned the greater part of Mecklenburg—Selwyn having two grants, one for 100,000 acres and the other 50,000 acres, the major portion of which were located around Charlotte.)

John McKnitt Alexander was at this period in his career evidently buying land for speculation.

On April 23, 1765, he purchased 509 acres from Lord Augustus Selwyn through his agent, Henry McCullough, but this tract lay along Broad river in present-day Gaston county.

During that year he also recorded two other tracts; one for 100 acres and another for 200 acres on McIntire's creek; in October, 1768, he made another purchase of 640 acres on Broad river in Gaston county.

He continued to buy and sell land during the next 50 years of his life. This writer counted 28 deeds recorded in his name in the Mecklenburg courthouse, some as small as three acres in the newly established town of Charlotte and one as high as 1,908 acres in Shelby (sic) county.

Three of John McKnitt's purchases were from James Sharpe, said to have been the husband of his sister, Jemima.

Early Mecklenburg chroniclers refer to this signer's estate as "princely."

He often served as administrator of the estate of his friends, appraised their lands and served as a friend of the court.

John McKnitt was married to Jean Bane, a Scotch-Irish lass who had come down from Pennsylvania with her parents, although it has been recorded they were married on a visit he made to Pennsylvania; the year has been given as 1760 and again as 1762, but to them were born two sons: William and his equally famous son, Dr. Joseph McKnitt Alexander, a graduate of Princeton University, and three daughters: Abigail, who married Rev. Samuel C. Caldwell, pastor of Hopewell Church; Jane, married Rev. James Wallis (Wallace), pastor of Providence Church; Margaret, married Col. Alexander Ramsey of Tennessee, all noted families each with a long line of descendants.

(James Wallis, Jr., son of James and Jane Alexander Wallis, has been identified as the youth who upon his graduation from Sugaw Creek Presbyterian Academy in 1809 recited an original treatise upon the Mecklenburg Declaration, mentioning it by name; his father was the teacher and conducted the exercises.)

(Except for the use of the word "Declaration" in the Moravian Church records of 1775 and the poem on Charlotte by the noted Adam Brevard in 1777, wherein the word "Declaration" is also used, young Wallis speech is one of the earliest known reference to this document.)

John McKnitt's will, dated July 2, 1807, ten years before his death, was one of the most extraordinary wills filed in early Mecklenburg. The value of his estate was not disclosed, but he bequeathed in cash approximately \$20,000 to his children and grandchildren. He also bequeathed a large amount of land to his children.

William, the eldest, already a wealthy man, was bequeathed seven tracts of land which totaled 1,053 acres; he also bequeathed to Dr. Joseph four tracts of 524 acres.

The nine children of William were bequeathed \$2,400; also \$2,400 went to the children of his daughter, Peggy Ramsey (then deceased), and by a codicill he bequeathed her husband a like amount also to the six children of Rev. James and Polly Wallis and to his daughter, Jane Caldwell. These amounts were later increased by a codicill, as follows: \$4,051 to William's children; \$3,000 to Polly Wallis; \$2,000 to Rev. Samuel Caldwell for the use of his nine children whose mother had previously died.

Another codicill was attached to his will in 1812 when he provided that the residue of his estate, as it continued to amass, be divided equally between his surviving children and/or their children, plus \$1,800 to Dr. Joseph's son, all to share alike when the land and notes and bonds had been sold and evaluated by the executors.

(William and Violet Alexander had 14 children—7 daughters and 7 sons.)

Richard Barry, Sr., a neighbor and co-signer with John McKnitt on the Declaration, and both sons, William and Dr. Joseph, and Amos Alexander, son of his brother, Hezekiah, were appointed executors of the will.

John McKnitt's loyalty to his adopted county was put to a test on more than the occasion when he signed the Declaration; he was summoned to Salisbury to serve as a juror on the following June 1st in the court of Oyer and Terminer. He nevertheless declined to attend. The Court finally ordered the sheriff to apprehend him and bring him to court whereupon he was fined 10 pounds and forced to act as a juror against his willingness to recognize the King's court.

He again proved his patriotism (as well as his humane-ness) in the famous Ochiltree episode. When Cornwallis invaded Charlotte with his "red coats" Duncan Ochiltree operated a store in Charlotte. The British induced him to renounce his oath to Mecklenburg and to serve as their

quartermaster. He thereupon "turned coat" and under the protection of British soldiers made numerous forays on the farms of the settlers and confiscated their food and fodder.

(John McKnitt instructed his farm hands to destroy all supplies upon the approach of the British Raiders.)

When Cornwallis and his army had passed northward through Charlotte they left Ochiltree behind without any protection. He was in great danger of bodily harm. One night he reached the home of John McKnitt and begged for protection.

"If I had met you outside of my home I would have killed you, Ochiltree," he said, "but rather than commit such a deed in my home I order you to put the Yadkin river between you and Mecklenburg before daylight."

(Word was received some years later the traitor escaped and reached the east coast of Florida where he lived under the protection of the Spaniards.)

He was the only signer of the Declaration who deserted the independence cause and in due course his name was erased from the Declaration.

The high moral principles of John McKnitt were demonstrated in 1777 following his election to the State Senate of North Carolina—the first elected under the constitution. All members of the Legislature were required to sign a "test oath." They realized a Tory or "ringer" might have been elected to the governing body; so when the test was proposed it was seconded by John McKnitt and immediately signed by him.

(The statement has been made the signing of the Declaration was at first considered a "test oath" for the delegates who attended the Convention and that, incidentally, in this connection the original National Declaration was purposely destroyed and the Declaration now on display in Philadelphia was signed as a "test oath" by the delegates to the second session of the Continental Congress.)

“Fire-hunting” was a highly unsportsmanlike manner of hunting of that period; the hunters would fasten a torch or candle on a contraption over their shoulders and as they stalked the deer the light would “blind” the animal until the hunter could creep close enough to make sure of his mark.

John McKnitt who had posted his land against deer hunting proposed in the Legislature this manner of hunting be declared illegal and punishable by fine or imprisonment.

He was an active member of the Legislature and named to numerous committees and appointed as commissioner to supervise the confiscation of the property of disloyalists in this area.

This signer’s political life came to an end following this term in the State Senate; he, however, despite his age, volunteered to accompany General Greene on his maneuvers against Cornwallis; his experience as a surveyor and knowledge of the terrain of the country as far north as Guilford Courthouse was used to advantage, but it is not known that John McKnitt was ever a soldier of the line.

He also served Mecklenburg as Register of Deeds from 1788 to 1792.

After the treaty of peace in 1783 he appeared to have centered his activities upon his plantations and increasing his estate, but continued to serve as a member in the great Hopewell Church he had helped establish.

(This church was so named after a church by that name in Pennsylvania.)

He had been made secretary of the Declaration convention because of his business and political acumen and as secretary he was appointed custodian of the original Declaration which however was burned in 1800 when his home was destroyed by fire.

John McKnitt's home plantation was located on the stage road between the Concord and Beatty's ford roads near the present-day Statesville highway.

After his first home was burned he erected another small house of split boards, with an attic; this house stood until a few years ago when the present owner, Burl Cashion razed it and used the lumber to erected a store house.

"I remember the old house well," said Mrs. Cashion, who moved to the home as a bride something over 50 years ago.

The famous "Declaration spring," where the signer and his compatriots often rendezvous, and it is said discussed the various phases of the Declaration before the convention in Charlotte, is now wholly obscured by dense underbrush deep in the ravine back of the home.

The site of the spring has been marked by a large boulder descendants placed in the ravine and the home of the Signer has also been further memorialized by the name "Independence Hill Baptist Church" erected a few years ago on Statesville road.

John McKnitt stated when the original Declaration was burned that "the document has been preserved," adding that two copies of it had been made—one by himself for Governor Wm. R. Davie and Hugh Williamson of New York; also Rev. Humphrey Hunter made a copy and after the fire John McKnitt penned a copy from memory, but time (25 or more years) and events had so bedimmed his memory he could not quote it verbatim.

His heroic role in the Declaration and the political affairs immediately afterwards is further exemplified by the draft of instructions he prepared for the Mecklenburg delegates to the first State convention in 1776; this list of instructions (22) clearly indicate the aims and purposes of the Declaration, the thoughts of its signers and the in-

tellectual ability and political perception of this truly great man.

Democracy was the key note all through his instructions which urged that absolutely all representatives in the Legislature should come from the people—not the professions or the wealthy, but “the people.”

REFERENCES:

The genealogical history of this Signer was taken from the family tree furnished the writer by Mrs. David Hunter of Charlotte and records of the noted Alexander genealogist, Dr. Alvah Stafford, while his public life was culled from the great number of references to him in the North Carolina Collected Records of the Revolutionary War period; the Declaration itself, the history of its loss by fire from numerous historians, Hopewell Presbyterian church records, land deeds, the Signer's famous will, the history of his children, and a number of sketches on him by historian Lyman Draper, Dr. J. B. Alexander, Foote's Sketches, traditionary episodes, court records of Rowan county and conversation with many descendants of the Signer.

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER VII

Hezekiah James Balch

Educated men, men of high moral character, when they move into a mere wilderness to establish their home, often with the Bible in their hands, are truly not “backwoods-men” as the appellation is generally understood.

The 27 signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence of May 20, 1775, were men of this type; were it not true, they could not have conceived and composed that famous document—the world’s first written declaration of human freedom by any people.

Hezekiah James Balch was such a man, minister, teacher, orator, graduate of Nassau Hall—known today as Princeton University.

When he signed the Declaration he was only 30 years of age. He was nevertheless already a seasoned thinker and imbued with the spirit of independence in human affairs it has been recorded he spoke fervently in favor of separation from the Mother Country.

History does not record whether or not he had been summonsed to the convention as a delegate. Or was he a

chance visitor? He may have been invited to serve as chaplain. In any event the convention delegates elected him as one of a committee of three to prepare the resolutions which were designed to eventually free Mecklenburg at least from the royal yoke.

The eastern part of the province had lived under royal rule 150 years or more and was more reluctant to break away from the Mother Country, but influenced by the boldness of the Mecklenburgians they soon took a positive stand against royal misrule.

Other members of the resolutions committee were: Dr. Ephraim Brevard and William Kennon, attorney—both fellow graduates of the young minister from Nassau Hall.

(This institution had been established a few years previously primarily as a theological seminary or training school for young Presbyterian ministers and to it had gone several other young Mecklenburgians.)

Hezekiah's family tree—its roots buried deep in old England and watered by royal blood, shows he was born in Hartford, County, Md., in the year 1745.

(This writer is indebted for the major portion of the information concerning the ancestors of this signer of the Declaration to Dr. Galusha B. Balch of Yonkers, N. Y., who in 1897 compiled a genealogical history of the Balch family in America. The fact is, though, it was transmitted to the writer by Miss Ruth Hall, librarian of the Beverly Historical Society of Beverly, Mass.—headquarters of the Balch Genealogical Society.

Dr. Balch stated the Balch family in America originated through two brothers of that name; one settled in Beverly, Mass., while the other took up his abode on the eastern shore of Maryland.

The name "Balch" is said to be of Welch origin. History first records the name early in the 1500s in England in the Bridgewater area. From that place about 1675 one John

Balch emigrated to America and settled in Maryland. He either brought his wife with him or he married Ann Bloomer after he reached Maryland. The facts on this phase of his life are not clear. But among his children was James Balch who married Ann Goodwin in Maryland.

About this period in their life (1743) they purchased a farm on Deer River in Maryland, called "Bond's Hope," and there it was Hezekiah James Balch was born in 1745.

The profession or trade of Hezekiah's father is not known, but it has been recorded he had been well educated and was a poet and had written several poems of considerable worth.

Certain chroniclers of early Mecklenburg have stated James Balch came to this area with his family about the year 1766 and that he sent his gifted son back to Nassau Hall to be trained for the ministry—further evidence of his high moral character. Young Hezekiah's name, however, does not appear in any manner in the annals of the period until his graduation from Nassau Hall in 1768. He was then ordained and appointed by the Donegal Presbytery (named after the original in Ireland) of Pennsylvania as pastor of Poplar Tent and Rocky River Presbyterian churches—then in Mecklenburg, but when Cabarrus was sliced off Mecklenburg in 1792 both churches fell within the bounds of Cabarrus county.

The history of the parents have been overshadowed by their illustrious son who in addition to his pastoral duties is said to have conducted a small school for the children of the congregations.

James and Ann Balch had several other children. Little is known of them here, but it has been stated two were educated for the Presbyterian ministry—Rev. James Balch who settled in Kentucky and established a noted family there; the other was Rev. Stephen Balch of Georgetown, S. C., while William settled as a planter in Georgia.

The Balch family tree also lists the following brothers and sisters of Hezekiah: Elizabeth, Margaret Ann, Amos, Rhoda, Rachel, John, Jane, in addition to Rev. Stephen and Rev. James Balch.

While Hezekiah was not the youngest signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration he was the first to fall before the scythe of the Grim Reaper; he died in April, 1776, less than one year after he subscribed to that immortal document.

Dr. Galusha Balch, in her history of the clan, was frank to declare that the laurels so long bestowed upon Thomas Jefferson should be accorded Hezekiah James Balch for his work on the Mecklenburg Declaration.

The cause of the death of the young patriot is not known. One can well imagine that in a wilderness where medical science was almost unknown many diseases, ordinarily curable, could easily become fatal.

Dr. J. B. Alexander, historian of the early 1900s wrote of him:

“It must be conceded that during his brief period of service on this earth, about seven years, he performed good pioneer work for the church and state . . . for the cause of liberty and education.”

Because of his early death and the absence or loss of church and courthouse records here but little is known of Hezekiah's personal life; the Balch family tree indicates he was not married. Early Mecklenburg histories, however, state he was married and had two children, but all record of his wife and children had been lost well over 150 years.

This writer nevertheless checked the land deed records in the Charlotte courthouse and discovered Hezekiah in 1773 purchased an 84-acre farm on the tongue of land formed by Coddle and Buffalo creeks—now in Cabarrus county.

Why, one might ask, would a young minister purchase a home if he were not married?

Checking this land deed further, it was discovered that Hezekiah sold the farm in January, 1776, and that in the transfer the deed was not only signed by himself, but his wife, "Martha Balch"—both in a firm, elegant handwriting.

Here, then, was indisputable proof of his marriage.

The witnesses to the deed had of course long passed away. Who was Martha Balch? Therein lay our next riddle. Discussing the problem one day with Prof. Chalmers Davidson of Davidson College, he stated Mr. Davis McWhorter of Bethel, N. C., had some data on the Balch family; so upon communicating with him I was informed Martha Balch married George Marlin McWhorter about the year 1782 in Mecklenburg county, but the marriage was not recorded here.

"He was a cousin of my great grandfather," Mr. McWhorter wrote, "and had been a pupil in the school Rev. Balch conducted at his home. Upon Hezekiah's death, his widow continued the school and young McWhorter assisted her as a teacher. They were later married and moved to Tennessee about 1785.

"George Marlin McWhorter's father, William McWhorter, had already sold his property (1779) in the Poplar Tent community and had settled near Nashville, Tenn. Upon going to Tennessee, George Marlin McWhorter was a teacher at a school first called Spring Hill Academy under the mastership of Rev. Thomas Brown Craighead, son of the celebrated Rev. Alexander Craighead, near Lebanon, Tenn."

Mr. McWhorter also wrote:

"Rev. Balch died intestate. His estate, however, was probated in Raleigh by his wife, Martha, and his brother, William. Martha's maiden name was Martha McCandless and it is believed Hezekiah married her in Pennsylvania. The two Balch children—Hezekiah, Jr., and daughter, Anne, never returned to Mecklenburg. Anne married Samuel Cald-

well, clerk of the court at Logan, Ky., and later a major-general in the War of 1812. They had nine children."

This bit of research cleared up the riddle of 150 years concerning Rev. Balch's marital status and confirmed the observation of Edgar Allen Poe 100 years ago: "That no man can concoct a riddle another man cannot solve."

Another riddle in connection with Rev. Hezekiah James Balch was the fact he had a cousin also named Hezekiah. He however never lived in Mecklenburg. Also a Presbyterian minister, he was ordained by the Orange Presbytery in Virginia. He preached for the major portion of his life in that State. He was married in Abingdon, Va.—whether to a member of the Established Church is not known, but since he was married by a minister of the Established Church and as a consequence Rev. Balch was called before the Presbytery and censured for his disloyalty.

Some time later he was again called before the Session of his church and charged with uttering remarks in the pulpit affecting the doctrines of the faith.

Because of the inconstancy of his cousin, Hezekiah James is said to have early in his career adopted the name "James" to distinguish himself from his erratic kin who however lived and preached throughout western Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee until his death in 1798.

Upon the death of Hezekiah James Balch in April, 1776, he was laid away in an unmarked grave in the cemetery of the Poplar Tent Presbyterian Church.

Some years later the grave was located and a 4x7 foot granite block was placed over the grave and on top of it was laid a thick marble slab on which was carved his name and date of death and that he was a signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration.

His memory was further perpetuated more recently by the Daughters of the American Revolution who inscribed

his name among the six signers (members of that community) to the bronze plaque placed in the wall of the church.

Hezekiah James Balch's services to his church, school and county, was further ornamented when he participated in the "Mecklenburg Resolves" convention of May 31, 1775, at which times the citizens of the county, realizing they had by their Declaration, erased all governmental authority in the community, established a temporary form of government or until the newly created commonwealth of North Carolina could adopt a constitutional form of government and thereby a permanent government for the province.

Had it not been for the early visit of the Grim Reaper, Hezekiah James Balch would no doubt have attained even greater honors and rendered his adopted county greater service in his profession and other fields of human endeavor.

REFERENCES:

Aside from the courthouse records, land deeds, etc., and the information furnished the author by Davis McWhorter of Bethel, N. C., the major portion of the genealogical history of this Signer was obtained from the Balch Family History by Dr. Galusha B. Balch, pub. 1897, through the courtesy of Miss Ruth Hall, Librarian, Beverly, Mass., the Poplar Tent church history and the Collected Colonial Records of North Carolina.

Of man's activity and attainments the chief results
are present in history.

—Carlyle

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER VIII

Zaccheus Wilson

After her marriage to King George III in 1760, Mecklenburg County was the first of the American communities to honor Queen Charlotte by the use of the name of her native principality in Germany, and was also the first to declare itself free and independent of the tyrannical rule of her despotic husband. Mecklenburg, however, was not formed as a county until 1762.

Among the Mecklenburgians who gathered in Charlotte on May 19-20th, 1775, and signed our declaration of freedom was Zaccheus Wilson who had started life in Mecklenburg as a surveyor.

He was, oddly enough, one of the signers of this historic document to leave Mecklenburg and pass his final days in another state.

He took his leave of Mecklenburg in 1798 and settled near the present named small city of Gallatin, Tennessee, where he died in 1824.

His wife, the former widow Lizzie Ross, nee Conger, of Rowan county, passed away in the year 1796; hence,

alone in Mecklenburg, except for one of his two step-daughters, Jane and Hannah Ross, Zaccheus decided to leave Mecklenburg and make his home in Tennessee with his brother, "Major" David Wilson—the only surviving member of his immediate family.

(Major David Wilson had lived in Mecklenburg many years, but some time earlier had moved to Tennessee where he had obtained a grant of land from the State of North Carolina for his services in the Revolutionary War.)

(Tennessee was at that time called the "Western District" of North Carolina, but upon the Federal government's offer to cancel the State's war debt incurred during the Revolutionary War the "Western District" was ceded to the national government and in 1796 it was admitted to the Union as the State of Tennessee.

Robert Wilson, an older brother of Zaccheus and David, long one of Mecklenburg's citizens, had also passed away and following his death his several sons had followed their uncle to Tennessee.

Thus it was Zaccheus decided to pass his final days amidst his own kin.

The three brothers had been reared in Cumberland county, Pa.—possibly born there, although their parents first settled in Cecil County, Maryland. They emigrated to Mecklenburg early in the 1750s and settled in the wilderness now known as the community of Poplar Tent Presbyterian church—today in Cabarrus county, but at that time it lay within the bounds of the original Mecklenburg county.

(Robert Wilson later moved to the Steele Creek church community and reared a large family.)¹

¹Without stating the source of their information, earlier historians have stated Zaccheus Wilson was an elder in Steele Creek Presbyterian church. Poplar Tent church in Cabarrus county, on the other hand, claims that he was an elder in that church. When Cabbarus county

Early Mecklenburg chroniclers indicate the brothers were accompanied to Mecklenburg by their parents; if true, their names or the site of their homestead are not a matter of public record. History also indicates they had three sisters.

Dr. Alvah Stafford of Charlotte, for many years a student of the famous Alexander clan, has informed me one of their sisters was named Martha and married Stephen Alexander in Maryland and later emigrated to Mecklenburg where he died in June, 1831, and she in September, 1843.

Mary Wilson married Robert Harris, son of Charles Harris, whose father was the Samuel Harris who has been designated as the "Samuel-who-died-at-sea" in 1728, but was buried in New York City, another sister married Luke Lea. Both David and Robert married in Pennsylvania. The maiden names of their wives are not known. Zaccheus is believed to have been not more than 21 years of age when he reached Mecklenburg; for it is known his romance with the young widow, Lizzie Ross, parallels to some extent the romantic marriage of Mecklenburg's Gen. Thomas Polk with Susannah Spratt—daughter of Mecklenburg's first settler—Thomas Spratt.

History records the year Zaccheus was born as 1733, but young as he was when he reached Mecklenburg it is

was formed in 1792 Zaccheus' home was brought within the bounds of that county; he was appointed county surveyor and lived within that area until he moved to Tennessee in 1798. While the history of Steele Creek Church, however, lists a Zaccheus Wilson as elder in 1766, Zaccheus, Sr., may have lived in that area when he first moved to Mecklenburg. His brother, Robert, had settled there and had a son, named Zaccheus, but it is believed he was too young to have served as elder in 1766; in any event, the church records show Zaccheus Wilson mentioned as elder in 1766 moved away and no other record of him there can be found; hence, it may possibly be he moved into the Poplar Tent area where he later married and settled until he left for Tennessee.

said he was already an experienced surveyor which perhaps next to operating a grist mill was the most practical trade or profession at that time in Mecklenburg.

Settlers were coming to Mecklenburg in great numbers—if not seeking freedom of religious worship, then in search of free or cheap land. They had learned of the fine wooded land here, the salubrious climate and insofar as they knew no one claimed the land. Was it not a mere wilderness? Inhabited only by Indians and wild animals? It had originally belonged to the Lord Proprietors (8) under a grant in 1665 from Charles II, but in 1729 it had been sold back to the Crown. Hence, upon their arrival here the settlers first located a good spring of water and then measured off 100 to 200 or 300 acres of land for their homestead.

When they had erected their log cabin home many of them employed young Zaccheus to lay down the boundaries of their claim which as a rule extended from a hickory tree to an oak; thence to a large rock or branch of the creek and after following its meanderings to another oak or hickory turned back to the place of beginning, as runneth the legal description quite universally found in the land deeds of those faraway days.

The settlers soon discovered after they settled here that the land belonged to Lord Augustus Selwyn who had inherited it from his father, John Selwyn, Esq., to whom George II had granted approximately all of Mecklenburg some few years after the Lord Proprietors had returned it to the Crown; they were therefore forced to purchase the land they claimed from Lord Augustus through his agent—attorney-in-fact, rather, Henry McCullough who was authorized to give them a valid deed.

(Many descendants of the settlers today think the land they inherited from the original settler had a royal grant; but that is not true; they merely hold a deed from Selwyn

who owned the land during the rule of the king and therefore the deeds are not royal grants or deeds direct from the king.)

Lizzie Conger, before her marriage to Nicholas Ross, was the daughter of John and Zipporah Conger, prominent settlers on the north bank of the Yadkin river and in the genealogical history of the Conger, Ross and Harris families of this area, published in 1911 by the well known historian, Mrs. Annie Sims Wright of Mississippi, the history of Lizzie Conger Ross Wilson's children, Jane and Hannah, has been well preserved.

Jane Ross married Enoch Morgan, native of Wales, died in Georgia; they had one child—the famous Rev. Nicholas R. Morgan, who married Mary Alexander, daughter of Nathaniel, son of Abraham Alexander, chairman of the Mecklenburg Declaration convention in 1775.

Hannah Ross married Matthew Harris, son of the noted Samuel and Martha Laird Harris, and moved to Georgia; they had four children—Ross Harris who was killed by Indians in the Seminole War; John N. Harris; James and Charles Harris.

Efforts to obtain a copy of the will by Zaccheus Wilson, if he made one, from the court at Gallatin, Tenn., has been fruitless, but due to the entire absence of reference to their children, if any, in Mecklenburg history indicates he died without issue.

He lived to be 81 years of age and it has been said practiced his profession as surveyor in Tennessee until his death in 1824.

(This writer would be glad to learn if there are any descendants of this couple in Mecklenburg today since history does not record that they had any children.)

Zaccheus Wilson's public life in Mecklenburg while not so prominent as some of the other signers of the Declara-

tion, was honored and trust-worthy. He was several times called upon to serve as administrator of the estate of his friends and appraise their lands.

When the State's convention at Halifax was called in April, 1776, to establish a government for the new State, Zaccheus was chosen as one of the delegates, along with four of his compatriots who had also signed the Declaration. And according to the Collected Colonial records he was present and voted on all questions before the Assembly.

Except as a captain of the militia in his District, his military career was limited to his service in the battle at King's Mountain, perhaps more as an engineer than a soldier of the line, for according to family tradition he was presented with the surveyor's instruments and an English compass captured there by the Americans.

(History records one Zaccheus Wilson was appointed in 1776 as a second lieutenant in the Mecklenburg company ordered to South Carolina to help suppress the Tories there, but it is believed this Zaccheus was his nephew, Zaccheus, son of his brother, Robert, of Steele Creek, or possibly a cousin by that name of whom however we have no other record.)

Among the various conventions North Carolina called to consider the Federal constitution, Zaccheus was chosen as a delegate from Mecklenburg to the 1788 convention; he persistently voted "nay" according to the Collected Records until at that convention the delegates were assured the national congress had agreed to accept the now famous Bill of Rights for the Federal Constitution. Thereupon the Convention ratified the constitution and upon its acceptance North Carolina became the 12th state of the Union.

Volume 24, page 701 of the Colonial records state Zaccheus was appointed one of the Commissioners to erect a courthouse some few miles east of Charlotte; like himself,

some other commissioners resided in that section of the county (Rocky River area), but when the General Assembly learned a courthouse had already been erected at Charlotte the bill providing for the new county seat was killed on the 2nd reading and vote.

Three years later (1792) when Cabarrus county of today was sliced off of Mecklenburg, probably as a consequence of the failure to move the courthouse to the Rocky River section, Zaccheus was engaged to lay down the boundary lines of the new county; he was then appointed official surveyor for Cabarrus county and continued in that post until he moved to Tennessee in 1798.

Available Tennessee history carries no reference to Zaccheus or his brother, David, in Sumner county, but as descendants of a noble line of Scotch-Irish emigrants here and in Virginia and Pennsylvania they no doubt attained high prominence in the affairs of the newly organized state and the county in which they settled.

Zaccheus Wilson's memory and the part he played in the establishment of our county has been preserved for all posterity by the Daughters of the American Revolution who so graciously subscribed his name on the bronze plaque they placed on the wall of the Poplar Tent Presbyterian church he served so many years as an elder and patron, and also on the granite shaft on the Charlotte courthouse plaza.

REFERENCES:

The data for this sketch of Zaccheus Wilson was obtained for the most part from the Collected Colonial Records of North Carolina, Dr. Alvah Stafford, Courthouse records, land deeds, church records, the genealogy of the Ross, Harris and Allied Families by Mrs. Anne Mims Wright of Jackson, Miss., 1911, a few brief references to him by Lyman Draper and almost innumerable records of Cabarrus County and Sumner County, Tenn., where he lived his last few years and was buried near Gallatin, Tenn.

No conquest is important, but that of new ideas.
—Carlyle

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER IX

Ezra Alexander

By Miss Rose Amanda Coffey, Charlotte, N. C.
(Descendant of this signer through his son, Augustus).

There has always been among civilized people a yearning some where in the back of their minds to know more about the history of their ancestors as well as their present-day kindred.

Such knowledge often gives one a great personal satisfaction and also bestirs in us an inspiration and an incentive to perform greater deeds ourselves and to strive for a more successful life.

Ezra Alexander, one of the 27 brave, true men who signed the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence on May 20, 1775, by this memorable act alone created a sense of honor and a love of country in the hearts of the hundreds of his descendants not so fully comprehended by the average person.

He was born February 26, 1740, in Cecil county, Maryland, son of Elias and Sophie Alexander who upon their

marriage in Somerset, Md., had moved to Cecil county where Ezra was born.

In the year 1754 with other members of his family he came to Mecklenburg county—then a mere wilderness, unnamed and only inhabited by roving bands of Indians, and upon his death 46 years later July 6, 1800, he was laid away in the cemetery of the Ezekiel Polk family near Pineville, N. C.

(This old cemetery as well as Ezra's burial place had long been forgotten for 100 or more years at least until one day about 1950 squirrel hunters discovered it buried deep in the woods near Big Sugaw Creek about one mile off the old Pineville road seven miles south of Charlotte on land now owned by J. W. Spratt).

Besides him, as if in one grave lay his wife, Mary Polk Alexander, daughter of Eziekel Polk, his neighbor and friend, but Mary did not pass away until September 6, 1814, age 70 years.

The double grave stone is beautifully carved, evidently imported from a northern stone cutter, and bears in addition to their names the following inscription:

“Farewell, Flesh, with all thy woes . . .

Above the skies, to see my Father's throne.”

Ezra Alexander's will is dated February 16, 1798, and affords ample proof of his economic success and his prominence in the county. It is on file in the courthouse, Charlotte, N. C., Book of Wills, A, and mentions the following children as his heirs:

Eleazer, James, Dorcas, Abdon, Augustus, Paris, Redempta and Polly Ann.

The history of Eleazer, James and Dorcas is not known to this writer who descended from Ezra through his son, Augustus, but in 1815 a member of the latter family, Abdon Alexander, was elected to the House of Commons, as our

House of Representatives is known today, from Mecklenburg county.

Abdon is also listed among the military records of Mecklenburg as a member of the N. C. 2nd Regiment in the War of 1812 when his fellow countain Gen. Andrew Jackson, by his victory over the British at New Orleans (1814) saved all of Louisiana and the states between the Mississippi river and the Rocky mountains for the United States.

The last link between Ezra Alexander and our comparatively modern county was this writer's great grandfather, Ezra's son, Augustus, who was born on his father's plantation along the west bank of Little Sugaw creek in the year 1772 seven miles south of Charlotte and died September 25, 1849.

He inherited a portion of his father's land in that section and in 1810 erected a rather substantial home on a high pine-studded knoll back about 200 yards from the present Pineville highway from Charlotte (U. S. 29). This old home is still standing, although woefully dilapidated and worn by the winds and rains of 145 years; Augustus called it "Mt. Seir," indicating his familiarity with the Bible and his known poetic and literary knowledge of the day.

This old home also long ago presented Mecklenburg with one of its unsolved historical riddles: According to tradition, an excellent oil painting—now in this writer's possession—was fastened one Sunday when the family was away attending church over the living room door.

Who painted the picture is not known; it consists of a fine life-size picture of America's symbolic bird, a wide wing-spread eagle, against a background of the great seal of the United States and the original 13 stars and stripes.

Why or how it happened to have been placed there is not known today, but its date of 1810 indicates when the house was erected and in addition it displays quite prominently two letters "A" for Augustus Alexander.

Augustus Alexander was married twice; his first wife was Dorcas Culp, many of whose kin of that name still reside in the Pineville community. His second wife was Sally Glass. This marriage was childless.

Ezra's son Paris, born near Pineville on September 17, 1775, some time after his marriage to Dinah Eugenia Neely, moved to Tennessee with the tide of emigration to the "Western District" as the present state of Tennessee was called, and passed away in Madison county near the present city of Jackson.

Ezra's home and plantation lay along the west bank of Little Sugaw Creek on land among several tracts he purchased in that section, mainly from his father-in-law, Ezekiel Polk, and the Lord Selwyn estate.

His will was filed July 30, 1800, and show his property was divided almost evenly among his children, except Eleazer's share was cancelled in favor of a note he owed his father for advanced money; he, however, was bequeathed his father's "rifle gun."

His married daughter, Polly Harris, was given the family slave, "Lucy."

Ezekiel Polk and Ezra's son, James, were appointed executors of the will. Whether or not Ezra purchased land before Mecklenburg was formed in 1762 as a county is not known; for all deeds prior to 1763 were filed at Wadesboro, county seat for Anson, but in 1774 he purchased 170 acres from Thomas Polk on Little Sugaw Creek; 92 acres were obtained in July, 1789, from Lavinda Alexander, and in January, 1792, he purchased 1,000 acres on Elk river in Tennessee from his father-in-law, Ezekiel Polk.

Ezra's mother before her marriage was Sophie Alexander, perhaps a cousin of his father; she was the daughter of Joseph Alexander, a tanner, of New Munster in Cecil

county, Md., but passed away several years before her husband who later married Polly Ann Taylor.¹

His daughter, "Polly," was evidently a child of this marriage; for upon his death in 1748 she applied for letters of administration on his estate at Fredericksburg, Md., and soon there after moved to the section now known as Mecklenburg County in North Carolina with Ezra and his brothers, except Elias, Jedekiah and Francis who remained in Maryland.

Where they first settled here is not known, but it is apparent they were citizens of prominence. Ezra cast his lot with his fellow countains by signing the Declaration of Independence from England. He served in the Continental army and saw considerable service against the enemy. He was an active member of the Committee of Safety and engaged in the battle against the Tories at Ramsour's mill; also fought against them in Lincoln county and arose to be captain of his regiment. He was at the battle of Hanging Rock and both history and tradition unite in declaring him a patriot and a noted soldier of the Revolution.

¹Dr. Alvah Stafford, noted Alexander genealogist, writes of Ezra Alexander, thus: Ezra Alexander, born, no doubt, in Cecil County, Md., in 1740, Died in Mecklenburg July 6, 1800. His wife, Mary, who may have been a Polk, died September 8, 1814. (The following receipt was found in the testamentary papers of James Alexander, filed in Raleigh Archives. James was one of Ezra's executors and evidently after his death, Paris, took over: "Received of Paris Alexander \$32, it being the allowance of four years from real estate to me by the last will of Ezra Alexander, Dec'd. October 1, 1818; received up to date—Mary (x) Alexander." This was hardly Polly Ann, although her first name was Mary—probably her mother (Mary died 1814). No record of Ezra has been found in Maryland, Pennsylvania or Virginia; his first record in North Carolina appears in the will of Arthur Alexander, dated Dec. 16, 1763; who designated his brothers, Ezra and Abraham, guardians of two of his children, and final settlement was made in the July court, 1777, by Ezra and Margaret Wilson (Arthur's re-married widow); the first land deed record of Ezra is dated Jan. 8, 1767. He was the administrator of Elijah Alexander in 1785; the 1790 census list his household as 4 sons, 2 daughters and wife.

He was also in the service of his county as overseer of the roads in 1778—then one of the most important posts in the county, due to the efforts of the citizens to connect themselves by good roads with all sections of the State; for when they first settled the county the community was isolated 75 to 100 miles from their courthouse at Wadesboro.

On May 22, 1954, the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, in recognition of his services to Mecklenburg county, unveiled a marker to him, but placed it beside the grave of a son, Augustus, in Sharon Presbyterian church cemetery, due to the inaccessability of the Polk cemetery near Big Sugar Creek so recently discovered after it had been lost these 150 years.

The address was delivered by Rev. Dwight L. Baker, and the unveiling was by great, great, great granddaughter—8 year old Louise Brewster of Gastonia, N. C.

May it be said of Ezra Alexander and his compatriots who signed the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence—the first such instrument of this nature recorded in history, that it may always be our concern to keep alive the memory of these great souls who by their hardships and perseverance and love of liberty and freedom of religion laid the foundation for our fine city and county.

They laboured to one end—that their children and their grandchildren might live in a free world and that the dream of universal brotherhood might be realized:

“We are proud of our heritage!

“O’er the lands that hear it,

“May God forbid we never dim the flame

“Or ever forswear it;

“Grant us courage, Lord, and strength

“To keep it burning bright,

“Till all the world shall see the path

“To freedom . . . and to the right!

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER X

David Reese

By Anne Wilson Idol, Winston-Salem, N. C.

The name "Reese" is the Anglicized form of the name Rhys (Celtic) which means ardour, ardency, a rush.¹

How perfectly the meaning of his name is exemplified by the life of the subject of this sketch!

David Reese was born in Brecknoc, Wales in 1710.² Intensive research in this country, in England and Wales, in an attempt to establish the parentage of David Reese, brought forth no results. One feels however, after a study of the life of this patriot, that he was a man of fine ancestry and background.

He was well educated for his day; for it is known that he had in his possession many valuable books said to have been from his father's library.³

¹Lower, Surnames of the United Kingdom, vol. 1, p. 170.

²M. E. Reese, Genealogy of the Reese Family (Richmond, Va., 1903) p. 26; Lyman C. Draper Mss. work on Meck. Dec. of Ind. and the Lives of Its Signers. (State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin). Mss. 2FF242.

³M. E. Reese, Genealogy of the Reese Family, p. 30.

He came to this country when young, settling in that section of Cecil County, Maryland, which later became a part of Pennsylvania.

The exact date of his arrival in America is not known. His name first appears as a witness to the will of Henry Hendrickson in Cecil County, Maryland, on Nov. 16, 1733.⁴

That he served in a Foot Company under Captain Zebulon Hollingsworth in the Colonial Militia of Cecil County, Maryland in 1740 is also of record.⁵

In 1737-8 David Reese married Susan Ruth Polk, daughter of Robert Polk, Jr., and his wife Grace (Guillette) Polk, of Dorchester County, Eastern Shore of Maryland⁶ a family of royal descent.⁷

David and Susan Ruth (Polk) Reese lived in Maryland and Pennsylvania until sometime between 1753 and '54, when they joined the great migration from the New Munster region in which they lived to North Carolina.⁸

They established their home on Coddle Creek, in what was then Anson County.⁹ This part of Anson County became the newly formed County of Mecklenburg in 1762. Their plantation home was on the North side of Coddle Creek, just outside the present town of Concord. It was located in the southeast section between the road that leads to Poplar Tent Presbyterian Church and the highway to Charlotte, now known as U. S. No. 29.

The home of David Reese was one of the finest places in Mecklenburg County. It was a comfortable weather-boarded house, one and a half stories high, with ten rooms.

⁴Jane Baldwin Cotton, Ed. Md. Calendar of Wills, vol. 7, p. 52.

⁵Maryland Hist. Magazine, vol. 6, p. 48.

⁶M. E. Reese, Genealogy of the Reese Family, pp. 30, 31; Lyman C. Draper Mss. work. Mss. 2FF242; Family Papers.

⁷Anne Wilson Idol, The Lineage of Susie Reese Borchert Burnett.

⁸Maryland Hist. Mag., vol. 6, p. 48; Rev. William Henry Foote, Sketches of N. C. Hist. and Biog., pp. 440, 441.

⁹Original Will of David Reese, Mecklenburg Co. Wills 1749-1869, vol. 15, p. 62. (State Dept. of Archives and History, Raleigh, N. C.)

There was a long porch across the front of the house with a trellis covered with roses at either end. The floors of the interior of the house were waxed, and the furniture, some of which was brought from Wales, was polished like glass. The house was surrounded by majestic oaks and there was a lovely flower garden, bright with all the old-fashioned flowers, and the walks bordered with sweet pinks.

In this old home his ten children grew up. The daughters married and had their wedding suppers here. The sons while young tilled the soil.

This house has succumbed to the ravages of time and not a vestige of it is left to show where it once stood.¹⁰

The site of this plantation home is in that section of Mecklenburg County which in 1792 became the newly formed County of Cabarrus.

David Reese owned seven hundred and seventy acres on Coddle Creek in Mecklenburg (now Cabarrus) County, North Carolina. This land was acquired both by grant and deed from 1763 to 1788. A grant for 150 acres was filed on August 6, 1784, but was not issued until July 10, 1788, after his death.¹¹

David Reese was a member of the group that formed the County of Mecklenburg in 1762. He was one of this county's first Magistrates. He also assisted in organizing seven Presbyterian churches, all of which are active today. He was a Ruling Elder in two of these historic Presbyterian churches. First in Rocky River, later in Poplar Tent Church. His service as an Elder in both churches covered a period of thirty-two years, from 1754 to 1786.¹² His

¹⁰M. E. Reese, *Genealogy of the Reese Family*, p. 39.

¹¹Mecklenburg County, N. C. Deed Books, No. 1, pp. 730-732; No. 2, pp. 271-273; No. 4, pp. 94, 95, Charlotte, N. C., Grant Book 67, p. 504. (Raleigh, N. C.)

¹²Rev. William Henry Foote, *Sketches of N. C. Hist. and Biog.*, pp. 440, 441.

interest and influence helped to make possible a number of schools in the county of Mecklenburg.

David Reese was a delegate to the Mecklenburg Convention of May 20, 1775, which adopted the famous Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence and was one of those selected to sign this immortal document.¹³

(The Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution have placed a bronze tablet at the left side of the entrance to Poplar Tent Presbyterian Church, commemorating the fact that five members of this Church were Signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence). The inscription upon this tablet follows:

In Memory of
 Richard Harris John Phifer
 Benjamin Patton David Reese
 Zaccheus Wilson
 Signers of
 The Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence
 May 20, 1775, Charlotte, North Carolina.

The name of David Reese also appears as a Signer on the monument which stands in the plaza in front of Mecklenburg Court House in Charlotte, North Carolina, which commemorates the historic Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence.

There are many other records that bear testimony to the patriotism of David Reese. During the war of the American Revolution though too advanced in years to take the field, he was appointed by the Provincial Congress of April, 1776, with Thomas Harris, to procure, purchase and

¹³Col. Rec. of N. C., vol. 9, pp. 1263, 1264; William S. Harris, Historical Sketch of Poplar Tent Church; Wheeler's History of N. C., vol. 1, p. 70, etc.

receive fire arms for the use of the troops of Mecklenburg.¹⁴ He also furnished provisions for the County Militia.¹⁵

He was long a Magistrate and member of the Mecklenburg County Court, serving in this capacity from December 23, 1778 until December 25, 1786, when the Court accepted his resignation.¹⁶

The six sons of David Reese all rendered service in the war of the Revolution.¹⁷ It must have given him great satisfaction and happiness to be able to live to see his country free and happy.

David and Susan Ruth (Polk) Reese were the parents of ten children.¹⁸

James Polk Reese, their eldest son, was born in 1739 in that section of Cecil County, Maryland, which later became a part of Pennsylvania.¹⁹ In 1771 James Reese was elected a Ruling Elder in Poplar Tent Presbyterian Church, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.²⁰ He is said to have been present at the signing of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence on May 20, 1775.²¹ He rendered service in the war of the American Revolution, holding the rank of Captain.²² In 1783 he served as Commissioner of Confiscated Property in Mecklenburg County.²³ About 1793 James Reese and his family emigrated to Tennessee, where he held

¹⁴Comptrollers Office Accounts War of the Rev. Book B, p. 75. (State Dept. Archives and History).

¹⁵Accounts of the U. S. with N. C. War of the Rev. Book A, p. 122. (State Dept. Archives and History).

¹⁶Colonial Records of N. C., vol. 18, pp. 148, 149, vol. 23, pp. 994, 996.

¹⁷Revolutionary War Records. (State Dept. Archives and History)

¹⁸Original Will of David Reese, Meck. Co. Wills 1749-1869, vol. 15, p. 62. (Dept. Archives and History); M. E. Reese, Genealogy of the Reese Family, p. 31; Family Papers.

¹⁹M. E. Reese, Genealogy of the Reese Family, p. 31.

²⁰Rev. William Henry Foote, Sketches of N. C. Hist. and Biog., pp. 440, 441.

²¹M. E. Reese, Genealogy of the Reese Family, p. 41.

²²Accounts of the U. S. with N. C. War of the Rev., Book A, p. 95. (Dept. Archives and History).

²³Rev. Army Accounts, Comptrollers Account, Book K, page 183. (Dept. Archives and History).

many offices of honor and trust, first in Sumner County, later in Maury County.²⁴ He died in Maury County, Tennessee on November 17, 1828.²⁵ He was survived by his wife, who was Elizabeth Brevard of Iredell County, North Carolina, and ten children.²⁶

Thomas Reese, the second son of David and Susan Ruth (Polk) Reese was born in Pennsylvania in 1742.²⁷ He was a graduate of Princeton University. So great was his desire to complete his education at Princeton that he gave up his right of inheritance from his father that he might further pursue his studies at this institution. This explains the reason for his not being named as a legatee in his father's will. Later Thomas Reese studied theology and was admitted to the ministry of the Presbyterian Church in 1773. He held pastorates in South Carolina and in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. From his pen emanated some of the effective papers that moved the inhabitants of Mecklenburg to patriotic zeal.²⁸ In 1794 Princeton University conferred the degree of Doctor of Divinity upon Thomas Reese. He died in August 1794 in Pendleton, South Carolina.²⁹ His wife, who he married in 1773, was Jane Harris of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.³⁰ They were the parents of seven children:

Catherine Reese, daughter of David and Susan Ruth (Polk) Reese was born in Pennsylvania on Sept. 23, 1744, and died May 6, 1826, at "Belvedere," Burke County, North Carolina. On May 31, 1768 she became the wife of Capt.

²⁴Cabarrus Co. N. C. Deed Book 2, pp. 183, 184; Iredell Co. N. C. Deed Book B, p. 33; Sumner Co. Tennessee Deed Bk. No. 3, p. 39; Court Records of Sumner and Maury Counties, Tennessee.

²⁵Family Bible Records.

²⁶Record from Brevard Family Bible; Original Will of Sarah Brevard, Iredell Co. N. C.; Family Papers.

²⁷M. E. Reese, *Genealogy of the Reese Family*, p. 31.

²⁸Rev. William Henry Foote, *Sketches of N. C. Hist. and Biog.*, p. 246.

²⁹Appleton: *Cyclopedia of American Biography*, vol. 5, p. 213.

³⁰M. E. Reese, *Genealogy of the Reese Family*, p. 42; Will of Charles Harris, Meck. Co., N. C.

William Sharpe, a member of Continental Congress. He was one of the executors of the will of David Reese.³¹ William and Catherine (Reese) Sharpe were the parents of twelve children.

The fourth child was David Tasker Reese, born in 1746 in Pennsylvania,³² died in 1827 in Rowan County, North Carolina.³³ David Tasker Reese was a patriot of the war of the American Revolution, serving in the Battle of Kings Mountain.³⁴ His wife was Mary Wilson of South Carolina. They had six children.³⁵

Susan Polk Reese, the fifth child of David and Susan Ruth (Polk) Reese was born in Pennsylvania in 1748. She is said to have been a charming woman of unusual intellect. She died unmarried.³⁶

The sixth child was Charles Guillette Reese, who was born in Pennsylvania in 1750. He was also a patriot of the American Revolution. His wife was an Indian Princess.³⁷

George Reese, the seventh child, was born in Pennsylvania in March 1753. As an infant he came with his parents to Mecklenburg County. He died in Pendleton District, South Carolina, on November 9, 1837, having married Anna Story of Sumter District, South Carolina, by whom he had ten children.³⁸ George Reese served in the war of the American Revolution, holding the rank of Lieutenant.³⁹

Mary Joanna Reese, David's eighth child, was born in 1754 in that section of Anson County, North Carolina,

³¹Record from Family Bible of Col. William W. Erwin of "Belvedere" near Morganton, N. C., who was a son-in-law of Catherine (Reese) Sharpe; Original Will of David Reese, Meck. Co. Wills 1749-1869, vol. 15, p. 62.

³²M. E. Reese, *Genealogy of the Reese Family*, p. 31.

³³Will of David (Tasker) Reese, Rowan Co., N. C. Will Bk. H, p. 376.

³⁴Katherine Keogh White, *The Kings Mountain Men*, p. 219.

³⁵M. E. Reese, *Genealogy of the Reese Family*, p. 120.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 120.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 121.

³⁸Rev. War Pension Application File No. W8545, National Archives, Washington, D. C.

³⁹Roster of N. C. Soldiers in American Rev., p. 45.

which became Mecklenburg County in 1762. Her husband was Robert Harris. They were the parents of five children.⁴⁰

Solomon Trustin Reese, ninth and youngest son of David and Susan Ruth (Polk) Reese, was born at the plantation home of his father in 1757. He also served in the war of the American Revolution. His wife was Harriet Jack, sister of James Jack of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, who carried the Mecklenburg Declaration to Congress, then assembled in Philadelphia. Solomon Reese and his family moved to Tennessee.⁴¹

Ruth Elizabeth Reese, youngest child of the subject of this sketch, was born in 1760. She married into the distinguished Henry family of Virginia. She, her husband and three children made their home in Virginia.⁴²

Many of these descendants of the marriage of David and Susan Ruth (Polk) Reese have been distinguished men and women, whose lives and characters contributed much to the religious, material, cultural and social life of the varied communities in which they lived.

David Reese died at the age of seventy-seven at his home in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, between Feb. 5, 1787, and the April session of court of the same year, these being the respective dates of the execution of his will and the date the will was admitted to probate.

He sleeps in Old Poplar Tent Graveyard No. 1, known as the McClure Graveyard, the burial place of many other Revolutionary Patriots.⁴³

Susan Ruth (Polk) Reese, wife of David Reese, is thought to have been buried beside her husband, though this is not definitely known. What a loss to posterity that no adequate history of her life can be written. Born of a distinguished family of royal lineage; the wife of a man of

⁴⁰M. E. Reese, *Genealogy of the Reese Family*, p. 301.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, pp. 301, 302.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 302.

⁴³W. Hampton Eubank, *Historical Sketch of Poplar Tent Church*, p. 7.

prominence and influence in the early colonies of Maryland, Pennsylvania and North Carolina; the mother of six sons who gave unstintingly of their services in founding this great Republic; and whose daughters married into influential families. How interesting an account of her life would be! It is known that she survived her husband, as she is named in his will, but the date of her death is not known.

To return to the subject of this sketch, we are told that David Reese was a man of lofty stature, being over six feet in height, very commanding in appearance, with bright dark brown eyes, and great bodily vigor.

It would seem as if he were a man born for the period in which many crises and important decisions were necessary for the founding of a great Republic.

This sketch should be considered as merely an outline of a life filled with important incidents, for such was that of David Reese, patriot, statesman, man of piety.

Several of this signer's descendants still reside in Charlotte—among them, J. A. Todd, age 85, whose mother, Dorothy Reese, was a daughter of David's great grandson, Marcus, and the special chair used by the signer is still in their possession.

What is history but an endless flight of winged
events?

—Emerson

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER XI

Richard Barry

Richard Barry, one of the 27 signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, was one of Mecklenburg's earliest settlers and his exemplary life of approximately fifty years here offer ample proof he was, indeed, an extraordinary pioneer.

The records do not disclose the exact year of his arrival in Mecklenburg, except it must have been some time prior to 1754; for on February 23rd of that year he acquired in some manner 540 acres of land "on the north side of tan yard branch"—a tributary of present-day McDowell creek in the northwest section of the county which however had not been formed and was almost wholly a complete wilderness.

(The section where he settled was at the time a part of Anson county, formed in 1748).

No record of Richard Barry's purchase of the 540-acre tract can be found at the Courthouse. He may have inherited it from his brother, Andrew, known to have lived here prior to that date. An abstract of the old deeds or

court records of Anson county now on file in the Department of Archives and History at Raleigh, indicate Andrew Barry died about 1753-54 and Richard was appointed administrator since Andrew died intestate; or it may be Richard purchased the 540 acres from Andrew's estate.

The two brothers had seemingly come to Mecklenburg together and established a tan yard on the south side of "tan yard branch" and one or the other acquired the tract "north of the branch;" but the records at Raleigh merely states the 540 acres was the "place where Andrew Barry now lives."

No record can be found of Andrew Barry after this transaction.

(He could have been Richard's father).

The tan yard was no doubt a joint operation and remained in the family for 75 years after this date (1754) and because it played such an important part in the life of Richard and his children further comment upon it might be made.

Upon Richard's death in 1801 it was inherited by his son, Hugh Barry, and operated by him until his death in 1836.

The yard was located on a high hill opposite the old home of Richard Barry across the branch and offered citizens of the county opportunity to get their hides cured or made into leather or they could buy leather direct from the tan yard to make their own shoes and boots or their saddles or harness for their draft animals.

While abandoned well over 100 years, the foundation walls of the curing-room and its tall well-constructed brick chimney, both erected with over-size hand-made brick, may still be seen; and the twin springs Richard and Andrew had discovered (which formed the branch and furnished them with water for the plant and home) today waters the cattle of the 5th generation—Wade, Cornelia and Carmen Alex-

ander, who however reside in the home their father (Abner Alexander) erected 73 years ago on a portion of the land south of the branch on Beaty's Ford road.

Hugh Barry never married and when he passed away in 1836 he bequeathed by will the tan yard, its equipment and his property, including much cash, to his sisters and brother and their sons and daughters, and they in turn over the years bequeathed the land to their surviving descendants and today the 397 acres on which the tan yard stood still belongs to Richard Barry's descendants—the Alexanders, and their sister, Mrs. Joe Davidson.

(The 540 acre tract was inherited by Richard Barry, Jr., son of the signer).

The Alexanders and Mrs. Davidson, incidentally, descended from Richard, Sr., through his daughter, Violet Barry Monteith.

Richard Barry had a son, named Andrew Barry, but little is known of him or his descendants.¹

Richard, the Signer, was born in the year 1726 and emigrated to Mecklenburg from Pennsylvania. Some early chroniclers thought he was born there; yet he married in Somerset county, Maryland, one Ann Price; hence, it may be that following their marriage about 1747 they moved on to Pennsylvania and about 1751 or 1752 emigrated to the wilderness known today as Mecklenburg probably with a number of friends and relatives.

(The courthouse records in Mecklenburg show he and one Jenet Barry signed several deeds here as witnesses apparently for friends or relatives who purchased land here, but in what manner Janet was related to Richard is not known.)

The date of Richard's marriage is not known, but it appears their children—the eldest, at least, were born in Pennsylvania. Their names have been some what confused.

Fortunately, the courthouse records in Charlotte have preserved them for us, as follows:

Andrew, Richard, Jr., Mary Barry Irwin, Ann Barry, Hugh, Violet Barry, Eleanor Barry.

Richard Barry died intestate. Richard, Jr., was appointed administrator of the estate and filed an inventory at Raleigh and in order to preserve the interests of Hugh Barry it became necessary a friendly agreement be signed by "all of the children of Richard Barry," as the agreement reads.

Thus it was the agreement signed by the children as noted above was filed in the courthouse.

No mention was made of their mother, Ann Price Barry; nor is there any reference to her in any public record of the Signer's life, but a tombstone erected to her memory stands in the old cemetery of the present-day Hopewell Presbyterian church where Richard Barry was an elder for many years following its information in 1762.

She died August 13, 1827, in the 92nd year of her age.

Richard Barry was for many years one of the most important citizens of his adopted county; he first attained distinction among his neighbors for his interest in the establishment of the present-day beautiful Hopewell Presbyterian church. The story is told that the first sermon the congregation had preached to them was under a large poplar tree in Richard Barry's yard. The name of the minister has been lost; it has been conjectured, however, he was the Rev. John Thompson. This event no doubt occurred in the late 1750s.

(The first church edifice was erected on land donated by John McKnitt Alexander—about the year 1762).

Another interesting phase of Richard Barry's life was his devotion to the church he had helped form; he had acquired a reputation as a pious citizen and in 1733 the pastor

of Hopewell presented him with a large Bible—now in the possession of Abner Alexander's children previously mentioned.

The original back of the book became so worn Richard replaced it with a leather back made from leather tanned in his own yard.

On the fly leaf appear these words: "Presented to me by Rev. Francis Cummings."

(Rev. Cummings was a young Mecklenburg minister who had obtained his ecclesiastical education at Queens College in Charlotte. Because Richard Barry had been instrumental in his appointment as pastor at Hopewell and for his work as one of the leading members, Rev. Cummings presented him with the Bible).

Richard Barry's public life was not limited to his work in the church. When Mecklenburg was formed as a county in 1762, he was named by the Legislature as one of the citizens to supervise its separation from Anson county.

The separation commission first met at Brunswick on December 31, 1762, and Richard Barry was one of Mecklenburg's representatives.

And in order Mecklenburg might have a form of government until the necessary officers could be appointed to govern the county, the commissioners agreed upon a Peace and Dedimus.

This document was signed by Richard Barry, according to the Colonial Collected records.

On February 6, 1764, he was given the oath of office as member of the House of Representatives from Mecklenburg.

He was one of Mecklenburg's first magistrates and in 1769 was called to Hillsboro to sit as a member of the panel of justices which formed the Superior Court, then the high court of the province, the Supreme Court not having been instituted until the year 1818.

Next to his participation in the Declaration Convention, Richard Barry's last known public service to Mecklenburg was perhaps the part he played in the establishment of Charlotte as the county seat for Mecklenburg; for various reasons, the establishment of a county seat or courthouse for the new county was not approved by the Legislature until 1769, although the county was formed in 1762.

(Several citizens had already constructed a building for a courthouse at the "cross roads," as the present-day named streets, Tryon and Trade were then called).

The Act authorizing the erection of the court house was passed on November 7, 1768, and among the commissioners appointed to establish the town was Richard Barry and in due course the town was plotted and 80 lots surveyed.

Upon his return to Mecklenburg from the Legislature where he sponsored a bill to finance local government projects locally instead of going to Virginia and South Carolina for the money, he continued to participate in the political and religious activities in the county and was accordingly invited to attend the Declaration convention in Charlotte.

His activities during the Revolution are not well known, except (50 years of age) he was too old to enter the army, but one can surmise his tan yard was a supply house for shoes for the soldiers and harness for the horses.

When Lord Cornwallis and his "Red Coats" and Tories reached the Catawba river at Cowan's Ford in his escape (Feb. 1, 1781) from his defeat at King's Mountain, Gen. William Davidson collected a group of local patriots and met Cornwallis at the river. Richard Barry was then 55 years of age; he nevertheless shouldered his gun and joined in the attempt to prevent the crossing of the river by the British. General Davidson, however, was soon felled by a Tory's bullet and was killed. Richard Barry and David Wilson recovered his body and carried it to the Samuel Wilson home where it was prepared for burial and that

night, following a darkened funeral, they conveyed the youthful General to Hopewell cemetery where by torch light he was laid away and today he is still considered one of the heroes of the Revolution.

The history of Richard, Jr.'s three children indicates they married well; he however disappears from the public records following the final administration of his father's estate in 1803.

There is some indication he moved to Georgia, but where he settled is not known; he had a son, also called Richard, and a daughter, Mary, who married into the General Irwin family. While the given name of Mary Irwin's husband is known to them as "Batt," it appears Richard, Sr.'s daughter, named Mary, became the wife of General Robert Irwin of Revolutionary War fame. Gen. Irwin's biographical history shows he married Mary Barry on March 28, 1798. There are no records, however, to indicate whether or not she was the Signer's daughter. Her name as Mary Barry Irwin appears among the signatures on the document on file in the court house where in 1803 "all of the children of Richard Barry" waived certain rights in his estate in favor of their brother, Hugh Barry, possibly indicating she was then a widow, since General Irwin passed away on December 23, 1800, and that Richard Jr.'s daughter, Mary, would not have been at a marriageable age in 1798.

Richard, Sr.'s other children, except his son, Hugh, married into other prominent Mecklenburg families: Richard, Jr., married Margaret McDowell; Andrew, married, first into the noted Sample family and, second, Ruth Byers; Violet married William Monteith and though the marriage of their daughter, Sophina, to Andrew Alexander, father of Abner Alexander, descended the Alexanders who now reside on the original 367 acres of the Signer and his brother, Andrew; Jane Barry, Richard, Jr.'s daughter also married a Sample, Wm. A.; another daughter whose name

is listed in Hopewell church records as Nellie married Barney Torrance; Ann Barry married William Grier.

The custom of brother giving the name to his offsprings the name of various brothers has to some extent confused early chroniclers as to the names of Richard Barry, Sr.; but the estate division document on file in the Mecklenburg courthouse specifically names the children, as stated above, to have been "all of the children of Richard Barry."

Few are the physical relicts of any of the signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration in existence today, thus it was the tan yard, no doubt the first established in the county, has been given due consideration in the history of this noted family which through marriage is related to numerous signers of the Declaration.

REFERENCES

The information for this sketch of Richard Barry was furnished by Miss Cornelia Alexander, the history of Hopewell Presbyterian church, land deeds, courthouse records and Collected Colonial Records of North Carolina.

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER XII

General Robert Irwin

By Mrs. Wm. H. Belk, Descendant of this Signer Through
his son, William Irwin.

The germ of life in man is like the seed of the thistle that may be borne thousands of miles and fall into rich loam; it will come up a thistle, as had all of its fathers, or if wafted by strong winds or increased in size by the rich nourishment of its new home it will still bear the unmistakable marks of its ancestors, and wounds, if one handle it too roughly.

The same courage and strength of mind that the ancestors of the Irvines (later spelled Irwin) of the Old Country displayed on many a battlefield have been repeated by their descendants in this new land.

The same ability in literature, in statesmanship, theology, that characterized many an Irvine of the Old Country has distinguished the Irvines of America.

Read the long list of honors won by the Irvines of Scotland, England and Ireland and then follow their descendants from 1729 when they first landed at Philadelphia down to the present time. You will still find them at the top.

Many left Scotland at the time of Oliver Cromwell and settled in Ireland.

William Irvine, one of seven sons, born in Ireland, emigrated to America with the McDowells about 1730. They settled near Carlisle, Pa., having come via Londonderry, England, to Philadelphia. He had twelve children, among whom were John, William, Jr., James, Samuel, Robert, Alexander, Francis, Mary, Elizabeth, Ann and Sarah.

William's son, Robert, the eighth child, was born August 26, 1738.

After the death of his father in 1763 in Pennsylvania he sold his interest in the estate to an older brother and with this small inheritance, Robert came to the newly formed Mecklenburg county.

He settled in the present-named Steele Creek community and there spent the rest of his life. He married, first, Mary Alexander, daughter of Zebulon Alexander. She was born in the Steele Creek community. His second wife was Mary Barry, believed to have been the daughter of another Declaration signer—Richard Barry. This marriage occurred in the last years of his life—March 28, 1798, when he was 72 years of age, and on December 23, 1800, he passed away at his home in Steele Creek.

He was laid away in the Church cemetery and on his tomb is engraved this beautiful and truthful delineation of his character: "Great, noble, generous, good and Brave"—a suitable epitaph for a signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration.

Robert Irwin attendel the Declaration convention in Charlotte on May 19-20, 1775, as a member of the Mecklenburg Safety Committee and was one of the first to sign that historic document.

He was chosen as one of the Mecklenburg delegates to the provincial congress at Halifax in April, 1776, called in

order the various counties of the state might discuss the affairs of the province and decide what steps should be taken to meet the impositions of the Mother Country.

Then it was the delegates selected the North Carolina delegates to the national congress at Philadelphia and had it not been for the majority vote of the eastern section of the province Robert Irwin or another Mecklenburg delegate would have been named for the Philadelphia post.

Robert Irwin was nevertheless chosen to represent Mecklenburg in the congress at New Bern in November, 1776, when the State government was formed, the Council of War was organized and officers appointed to head-up the military forces of the counties.

Appointed one of the colonels, Robert Irwin was a distinguished, brave and capable officer throughout the war. He had already distinguished himself as a bold, fearless officer as the commander of a regiment under the noted General Griffith Rutherford in the expedition to subdue the Cherokee Indians in the western mountains.

He has been credited with the victory at the Hanging Rock battle in South Carolina. He had served under General Waddell in the Regulators' war and followed General Thomas Sumter to Rocky Mount. Again, in 1781, he accompanied General Griffith Rutherford in the campaign at Wilmington and participated in numerous campaigns during the Revolution.

He was commissioned a general at the close of the war and until his death almost 25 years later he stood out as one of the foremost citizens of the county.

The children of Gen. Irwin were: Mary, who married John Dinkins; Dorcas, married Andrew Herron; their daughter was May Irwin Heron; Margaret, who married Hugh McDowell; William married Lydia Birdsong; Robert, Jr., married (first) Elizabeth Ray in 1818 and (second)

Martha Alexander; Sarah married John Fincher; James; Eleanor (Nelly) who married James Moore.

Robert Irwin and his co-signer of the Declaration and associate on the County Court, Richard Barry, Sr., were also related through the marriage of his son, Batte Irwin to Elinor Barry, daughter of Richard, Jr., who had married Margaret McDowell.

While it has been said that although Robert Irwin never enjoyed the advantages of a classical education, he possessed an intellect considerably above the generality of men, capable of culture and achievement.

By his own exertions he acquired considerable knowledge of matters pertaining to Church and State in both of which he manifested a deep and lively interest. He was of a social and genial disposition, fond of anecdote, of great conversational powers and with all a popular and fluent speaker. Hence, the frequency of his being placed in important positions which required the exercise of such gifts.

In addition to the other many honors conferred upon him, he was appointed one of the first magistrates of Mecklenburg; by virtue of this office he was called upon to pass upon various legal documents and to perform the rites of marriage for the young settlers. He was not only noble in church, serving 20 years as elder in the Steele Creek Presbyterian church, but noble in the State's General Assembly, where he served 12 years, both as Senator and member of the House during the period which tried men's souls.

He served with General Thomas Sumter in the dark and perilous days of the Revolution.

The name Irwin has been spelled in many ways, but all originated through the name of Cyrus Irvine which means "strong."

The lineage has been traced back through the centuries to the Scottish kings, even to Charlesmagne, king of Scotland (crowned March 27, 1306).

The name "Irwin", still spelled "Irvine", first entered the genealogy of Mecklenburg's famous Revolutionary War general, Robert Irwin, signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration, when Lady Elizabeth Douglas married Sir Alexander Irvine, 6th Laird of Drum, about the year 1510.

The name is then brought down through the "Book of Irvines" and the peerage of Scotland well over 200 years until William Irvine, born in Scotland, moved to Ireland; then to America, where he settled in Pennsylvania.

Upon his arrival in America, the name was changed to "Irwin."

William Irwin, Sr., was married to Eleanor----- The date of this event is not known. She died in 1787 and is buried in the Steele Creek cemetery. Her great, great granddaughter, writer of this sketch descended from their son, Robert Irwin, the Signer, through his son, William, born 1775, married Lydia Birdsong in 1802; their son, Batte Irwin, married Mary Hayes Robinson in December 1846; their son, John Robinson Irwin, born December 29, 1853, married Margaret Henderson, Feb. 19, 1879, and as their daughter, Mary Irwin, this writer was born March 3, 1882, and was married to the late Charlotte merchant, William H. Belk.

REFERENCES

References for the genealogical history of the Irvins and Irwins are the various family and royal family record in Scotland, Ireland and England, the Irvin Society of America, Bible and tombstone records, Royal Pedigree Society, descendants of Emperor Charlemagne, Peerage of Scotland and Colonial Records of the State of North Carolina.

Sparse population makes every man his own master.
—Anonymous

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER XIII

James Harris

Like an aside on the stage, it might first be stated the progenitor of the great Harris family in Mecklenburg and Cabarrus counties—Samuel Harris—lies in an unmarked grave in the heart of lower New York City.

Born in Scotland in the late 1600s, Samuel Harris was a staunch Protestant or Dissenter and could not surrender his conscience to royal tyranny and religious intolerance; hence, in the year 1728, he abandoned his native land and set sail for America.

He was accompanied by two of his young sons—Charles and Thomas.

The strain and rigors of a trip across 3,000 miles of open sea in a ship barely more than a tub when compared to the luxury liners of today was more than his aging body could withstand. He died at sea. The sons held his body aboard the ship until they reached New York City. They thereupon lay their father away in a grave unmarked today on the island of Manhattan.

Samuel and his two sons had some time previously, perhaps two or three years, been preceded to America by three other sons—Robert, James and Samuel, Jr.

They had settled near Carlisle, Pa.

Following the burial of their father, Charles and Thomas moved on to Pennsylvania and joined their three brothers. And there they lived together several years. All married and seemingly prospered. But for one reason or another they broke ground and about 1750 emigrated to the backwoods of what was to become Mecklenburg county and settled in the Rocky River section (now in Cabarrus county.)

(The descendants of Samuel, Jr., state he was the first of the brothers to come to Mecklenburg; be that as it may, the five brothers however soon settled as a clan in the Rocky river section and as one brother named his children after another brother and cousin married cousin the families soon became so integrated genealogists have never been able to satisfactorily trace the lineage of the earliest children.)

James Harris, second son of Samuel-who-died-at-sea, is generally recognized as the James Harris who signed the Mecklenburg Declaration.

He was evidently well beyond his three score years at that time—May 20, 1775; for he had no doubt attained his majority (21 years) when his father died in 1728. Hence, when and if he signed the Declaration, he was at least 65 years of age and too old to participate as a soldier in the war that followed that great event.

He was then nevertheless a man of wealth, influence and the progenitor of a great family. He might therefore have easily been selected as a delegate to the Declaration Convention in Charlotte although his home lay 15 or more miles back in the wilderness east of Charlotte.

(Capt. Thomas Polk had been requested by the Committee of Safety of the County to summons two delegates from each of the 13 companies of militia under his command to attend the Convention what ever may have been its aim and purpose, but when called no one would have imagined it would immortalize itself by the adoption of what is now generally considered as one of America's great documents of freedom.)

James Harris was most probably not a militiaman, but Capt. Polk may have invited him to attend the meeting and to participate in its deliberations.

He was one of the judges on the Court of Inquiry established by the Resolves of May 31st to deal with vociferous Loyalists, according to a letter John McKnitt Alexander wrote some years later when the actuality of the Declaration was put in doubt by certain uninformed skeptics.

The county at that time included the present-day Cabarrus and Union counties; hence, because of the more western location of Charlotte the court hearings for the eastern part of the county were held at the home of James Harris, again indicating his patriotism and prominence in the county.

His children as noted in his will on file in the courthouse were: Robert, Jr., who married Margaret Harper in Pennsylvania, the father of seven children, one of whom, Oliver, was the grandfather of Charlotte's late noted newspaper editor—Wade Hampton Harris.

Other children mentioned in the James Harris will were: Samuel, III; John, Jennette, Elizabeth, William, Mary, most of whom came here, but according to family history moved to Tennessee (formed 1796) during the great migration from North Carolina between 1800-1850.

The will of James Harris was dated October 14, 1778. Strange enough it does not mention the name of his wife. His first bequeath, however, was to "my dear wife during

her life time the use of the plantation I now live on," etc., including money and slaves.

He had acquired considerable property and after a gift of 100 pounds "proclamation money" to his young daughters, he ordered his executors: his two sons, John and Samuel and Robert Harris, son of his brother, Charles, to divide the remainder of his estate among all of the children.

(He also appointed the executors as guardians of his young daughters, Jennette and Mary.)

The will is dated October 14, 1779, barely more than three years after the Declaration convention, and may be found in Mecklenburg county Will Book C, page 136.

The genealogy of the Harris family does not indicate in any place James, Sr., was a signer of the Declaration. One branch of the clan, however, claim Maj. James Harris was the signer. That allegation cannot be true, however, for his tombstone in ancient Rock Springs cemetery on county highway 218, near Mint Hill, states he was born in 1772 and died in 1811.

"Major James is identified in "Col." Robert Harris' will as my grandson."

There was another James Harris, son of Samuel, II, born Oct. 4, 1739, who was old enough to participate in the convention and may be the signer; he was a nephew of the subject of this sketch, but there is no record he attended the convention or signed the Declaration.

His descendants believe he was the signer.

James, Sr., son of Samuel-who-died-at-sea, appears most likely to have been the signer, but Dr. J. B. Alexander in his history lists a "Colonel James Harris" as the signer.

He does not however state the sources of his information. But gives the birth date of "Col." James as April 3, 1739, and in June, 1780, he was a major in Col. Robert Irwin's regiment at the battle at Ramsour's mill in Lincoln county; that he was subsequently promoted as colonel and

in 1785 chosen to represent Mecklenburg in the State Senate.

Dr. Alexander intimates, though, he was a "brother of the five sons" of Samuel-who-died-at-sea, clearly an error; hence, if James, Sr., was not the signer several historical circumstances indicate James, son of Samuel, III, and Martha Laird Harris, was the pioneer to thus so materially honor himself as a signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration.

While James, Sr., also had a son named James, born about 1735, the genealogical history of the clan do not indicate in any manner he participated in the Mecklenburg Declaration.

James, Sr., was an elder in the Rocky River Presbyterian church and had participated in its organization and upon his death about 1778 he was laid away in an unmarked grave in the church's cemetery.

REFERENCES:

The data for this sketch was obtained from the famous Harris Genealogical History compiled by Mrs. Wm. R. Wright, of Jackson, Miss.; the Mecklenburg County courthouse records, James Harris' will, the Collected Colonial Records of North Carolina and J. B. Alexander's History of Mecklenburg County.



PHOTO BY RONALD SEVIER AUSTIN

Pre-Revolutionary War home of the Declaration Signer, Hezekiah Alexander, Erected 1774, Stands on the Grounds of the Methodist-Home-for-the-Aged on Shamrock Road, Charlotte, N. C.—the Only Home of Any of the Declaration Signers still Standing and is Today Maintained as a Public Shrine by the Daughters of the American Revolution of the City of Charlotte.

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER XIV

Hezekiah Alexander

When Hezekiah Alexander, age 47, signed the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence on May 20, 1775, he had already attained a place of prominence in his adopted county; but although not born here he did not propose to permit a tyrannical king to upset the Protestant community he and his compatriots (and their brave women folks) had laboured so strenuously for 25 years to carve out of a dense wilderness.

He was born January 13, 1728, according to his family tree (instead of the year 1722 as stated by several historians) in the Scotch-Irish settlement of New Munster, Cecil County, Maryland.

When he was 26 years of age, with his older sister, Jemima, and his younger brother, the noted John McKnitt Alexander, he moved in the year 1754 into the backwoods community now known as Mecklenburg county—then a part of Anson county of which Wadesboro 75 miles away was the county seat.

(They were accompanied by Jemima's husband, Maj. James Sharpe. They had six children, several of whom left

worthy descendants, including U. S. Senator John Sharpe Williams and General Sterling Price of Civil War fame; Jemima's grave in the first Sugaw Creek cemetery is marked with a well preserved tombstone which indicates her birth and death—"Jan. 9, 1727, and Sept. 1, 1797 and that she was a widow 38 years.)"¹

The Alexanders had it appears been induced to move to Mecklenburg by their near kinsmen—the Brevards—who some few years previously had settled in the area now embraced by Iredell county.

Hezekiah was the son of James Alexander, whose father, Joseph Alexander, was a native of Sterling, Scotland, later moved to Ireland, probably in the Ulster area, where religious freedom had been promised emigres from Scotland.

Due to political pressure from the Crown, however, Joseph Alexander discovered Presbyterianism there had less freedom than in Scotland; so he emigrated to America some time during the last half of the 1600s. Some records indicate he first settled in Pennsylvania; then moved to Cecil County, Md., where Hezekiah's father (James) was born in 1690.

When Hezekiah's father was 25 years of age he married Margaret McKnitt, daughter of another famous Covenanter family of Cecil county, and like his own family were quite prominent in the affairs of that county—the birthplace of so many Mecklenburg pioneers.

¹The life history of Jemima Alexander Sharpe has been sadly neglected; born in 1727, she married James Sharpe or possibly John Sharpe, according to certain descendants; their six children were: Priscilla, Sally, Ezekiel, James, Jemima, John, but in the first cemetery at Sugaw Creek Presbyterian church where she was buried one "Sarah" Sharpe was buried in the same plot and her tombstone states: "Daughter of James and Jemima Sharpe, born in September, 1755, died September 18, 1794." Who was Sarah? She is not listed among the children. This data suggests several questions. Did Jemima's husband pass away in Pennsylvania? Could Jemima have traveled 500 or more miles with six small children and rear them in an absolute wilderness? Here are riddles we leave to the genealogists.

The children of James and Margaret Alexander, in the order of their birth, were: Theophilus, born May 8, 1716; Edith, born January 10, 1718; Kisiah, born May 9, 1720; Amos, born, January 13, 1722; Ezekiel, born June 17, 1724; Jemima, born January 9, 1727; HEZEKIAH, born, January 13, 1728; Esther, born-----; John McKnitt, born 1733; Margaret (named after her mother), born June 6, 1736.

Too old, perhaps, to change his residence, James Alexander, despite the prominence his children had attained in Mecklenburg, remained in Maryland. He passed away early in 1779. He had some years before, however, lost his first wife by death and had married Abigail-----.

Five children were born to them.

James Alexander's will was recorded in the Book of Wills in the courthouse at Elkton, Md., in July, 1779.

His name is recorded several times in the records of the Presbyterian church, Presbytery of New Castle, Synod of Philadelphia, to which incidentally the first Presbyterian churches in Mecklenburg belonged or until a Presbytery and synod was organized here.

Where the Alexander emigres lived when they first moved to Mecklenburg, or their earliest activities here, is not known, but on January 13, 1760, Hezekiah was married to Mary Sample, daughter of William Sample, one of the most prominent settlers and land owners in the county.

Hezekiah and Mary Alexander presented Mecklenburg with 11 children, as follows, according to their birth: William, born-----; Amos, born-----, 1769; Hezekiah, Jr., date not known; Silas, date not known; Oswald, born September 16, 1775; Mary, Kesiah and Esther, none of whose birth are recorded here.

"Hezekiah Alexander was a statesman rather than a soldier," one of his descendants once wrote.

History accordingly records his name and activities chiefly as an administrator and councillor, due to some ex-

tent to his knowledge of law, his post as a magistrate and his advanced years which prevented active military service.

Hezekiah's first purchase of land following the formation of Mecklenburg as a county, according to the deeds in the courthouse, was May 13, 1765, when he purchased 180 acres from Moses Ferguson on Allison's creek—identity now not known.

He had no doubt, however, purchased land in this area prior to this date, but because the county was a part of Anson county until November 1762, such deeds were filed at Wadesboro and the courthouse there was later destroyed by fire; so the first deeds in Mecklenburg were not filed or transferred here until 1763.

His next purchase of land was in April, 1767, when he obtained 300 acres from Lord Selwyn on Alexander's Mill creek paying 25 pounds in "proclamation money"—approximately \$65 at that time.

Hezekiah also purchased 300 acres in 1769 on a branch of Sugaw Creek from his brother, John Mck., with Abigail Alexander and James Baird as witnesses to the deed which was approved in open court by the clerk—Robert Harris. This Abigail may have been Hezekiah's step mother.

(The court at that time consisted of all the county's magistrates seated as a panel and Hezekiah was one of the group.)

(North Carolina had but little, if any, hard money and "proclamation money" was used.)

He also purchased, perhaps for speculation, 400 acres on Broad river (now in Gaston county) from William Minter who lived in New Castle, Pa.; soon thereafter he obtained 170 acres on Long Creek from John McK., and during 1774 he purchased 370 acres on McAlpine creek from Jane and John Fleniken—another signer of the Declaration.

In 1776, he purchased three tracts of a total of 770 acres on McAlpine and Sugaw creeks from Thomas Polk and also in 1778 he and Adam Alexander bought 2½ acres in lots on "Tryon street," indicating the earliest known record of the name of Charlotte's "main street."

The legal description of the various tracts he bought are now so indefinite it would be with great difficulty, were it even possible, to identify each tract today; but beyond all doubt it was on one of the McAlpine creek tracts he erected in 1774 his fine old-field stone residence which stands today after 182 years on the grounds of the Methodist Home for the Aged and Retired Ministers on Greenway road.

This old home is the only residence still standing of any of the signers of the Declaration.

After passing through several different owners it was purchased by the Rev. E. M. Cole who in 1948 deeded it, along with 100 acres to the Methodist church for a home for its aged ministers. The church then (in 1950) leased the old Alexander home to the Daughters of the American Revolution (God bless 'em!) and they at once entered upon a campaign to obtain sufficient funds to restore the old rock house to its former grandeur, perilous as may have been the period when it was constructed, and today it stands as Mecklenburg's most prized relic of the Revolutionary war period.

(It was here that North Carolina's famous lawyer—Waightstill Avery—also a signer, and a loyal friend of Hezekiah, lived as a young man and rode back and forth to his law office and the courthouse in Charlotte.)

Several stories have been told of this famous old home; it is two stories high, with a full basement wherein Mary Alexander stored her provisions for her family of 11 children. The story is told how English soldiers raided her basement one day and what food they could not carry away they

destroyed and at times it was necessary her boys seek safety in the woods during the Revolution.

The old house was a home, of course, but it was also a fortress against marauding Indians and English soldiers.

Philadelphia and Charleston were Mecklenburg's main trading centers. These cities were reached quite regularly by wagon trains, particularly during the Revolution. Hezekiah's son, William, operated a wagon train to Philadelphia. He would haul the pelts and produce of the farms and forests to Philadelphia and would bring back all sorts of goods ordered by the ladies and men of the community.

His order book or diary during the Revolution presents an excellent picture of the times and hardships "enjoyed" by these people of the backwoods, cultured and refined as they were for the period, and is now a prized possession of Charlotte's noted antiquarian—Osmond Barringer.

One of the unusual proofs of Hezekiah's love of religious freedom and his allegiance to the beliefs of the Covenanters of England when the Presbyterian, Oliver Cromwell, ruled as the only dictator England ever had, was a fish carved on one of the stones on the second floor of the now famous rock house. This fish was not discovered until the Daughters had the 100-years old English ivy cut from the old home. For a time it remained a mystery; then one of the historians recalled it was a secret symbol the Presbyterians had agreed upon between themselves to indicate that when the fish was found on the walls of a home they would know it was a Protestant home, a "Christian home," and that all members of the faith would know they could expect to find hospitality and freedom of religious expression within its walls.

Further evidence of Hezekiah's high moral principles is indicated by his will; when dividing his property among his children he specified the executors should base their division on like "quality and quantity" for each heir; he was

quite feeble when the will was executed and forgot two or three provisions he had in mind and by a codicill he stated his wife should possess his home and plantation "only during her life time."

He also decreed that the share his daughter, Mary, would have obtained be paid to her husband, Capt. Charles Polk, who had accidentally caused her death a few months before in a gun accident.

Any attempt to write in detail upon Hezekiah Alexander's various activities in the affair of Mecklenburg, his civil and military labours, his interest in the church, Queens College and the general welfare of the county he had helped to develop, would constitute a full history of early Mecklenburg and Charlotte.

His more important contribution to Mecklenburg was, of course, the part he played in the Declaration Convention and his signing that immortal document and his gift of 101 or more descendants now so prominent here.

When the county was first formed he was appointed one of the magistrates. This group when seated as a panel constituted the County Court. Historians have chronicled the statement he was one of the "most clear-headed magistrates" on the bench. He also served as a member of the local Committee of Safety before the Revolution and following the national Declaration of Independence he was named as one of the members of the State Council of Safety.

This was indeed a high honor. His advanced age prevented the hardships of a soldier of the line, but when Col. Thomas Polk's regiment was formed after the Revolution broke out he was named as paymaster for the regiment.

Always interested in the welfare of the county and state of the newly formed United States of America, he remained active in local affairs until his death in 1801 at the age of 73 years.

He was laid away in the present beautiful Steele Creek Presbyterian church cemetery.

REFERENCES:

The data for this sketch of Hezekiah Alexander, particularly the genealogical history, was obtained from the Alexander family tree held by Mrs. David Hunter of Charlotte, N. C., descendant of the Signer through his son, Waldo; also Mrs. Hugh Houser, of Charlotte, N. C., descendant of the Signer through his son, Amos, but his land deeds, will, public life was obtained from the courthouse records, the North Carolina Colonial records, sketches of his life by Lyman Draper, Dr. J. B. Alexander, Hunter's and Foote's sketches.

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER XV

John Foard

John Foard, spelled so after the Scotch manner rather than the English "Ford," was one of the 27 signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence and for many years one of the country's foremost citizens.

The history of his early life, however, has been dimmed by the shadows of these 200 years since his arrival in Mecklenburg. The date of his arrival here is not known. His descendants state he was born in Ireland of Scotch parentage. The year was 1727. The names of his parents are not known. Tradition has it, though, that his mother sent him to America in order to escape military service in the English army. He is said to have come over with two brothers. One was named Wyatte Foard. The name of the other brother is not known.

The brothers first settled in Maryland, perhaps Somerset county, where many Presbyterian emigrants settled in the 1600's and early 1700's. No doubt they had come over with a group of friends or relatives. Later, however, they moved into Virginia and in the course of a few years emigrated to North Carolina.

They first stopped in Rowan county. Wyatte Foard settled on a tract of land now embraced within the bounds of Davie county and has many descendants there. John, the "Signer," later settled in Lower Providence township of present-day Mecklenburg. The other brother moved on to Georgia and all trace of him has been lost.

John married Katherine Robinet before he came to Mecklenburg, but when or where is not known. She is said to have disliked their location in Providence township. John therefore sought a more suitable place along the upper waters of McAlpin's creek, indicated by the land purchases he made on this stream.

His name first appears in the land deeds registry in the Charlotte courthouse in January, 1767, book 3, page 276. On the 8th day of that month they purchased 395 acres on this creek from Lord Augustus Selwyn through the latter's agent, Henry McCullough.

(Mecklenburg had been formed as a county only five years previously.)

(Lord Selwyn owned 150,000 acres from the King in 1739 by grant in Mecklenburg and had appointed Henry McCullough as his attorney-in-fact and gave him the power to sign land deeds in his name.)

John had no doubt lived some few years in Mecklenburg prior to that date; for in 1766 he was listed as a member of the Clear Creek militia company captained by the noted Adam Alexander—also a signer of the Declaration.

He was a sergeant at the time; hence, had perhaps served several years in the organization.

The land he purchased brought him within the limits of present-day Clear Creek township in the vicinity of Mint Hill of today; he made several other purchases of land in this area. Some time after he bought the 395 acres from Lord Selwyn he sold the 95 acres to William Morris who was later to become the husband of his daughter, Eliza-

beth; John then purchased an additional 90 acres adjoining the original tract from Lord Selwyn.

From the original tract he and Katherine sold to John Robinette (perhaps her brother or father) on January 8, 1778, 50 acres by one deed and 102 acres by another deed and the last 90 acres purchased from Lord Selwyn was sold to Hugh Caragan. Using this money, perhaps—at least, he purchased several one-acre lots on Tryon Street in the newly established county seat—Charlotte, which, as if bought for speculation, he sold to different settlers.

John Foard had thus attained a place of prominence in his adopted county—an able, pious citizen, even before he was called as a delegate to the Declaration convention in Charlotte, May 19-20, 1775.

Early Mecklenburg chroniclers state John Foard was a member of the Presbyterian faith² and was one of the founders of the present-day beautiful Presbyterian Church in the village of Mint Hill, called the Philadelphia church; this church, incidentally, was first called the Clear Creek or Rocky Springs Presbyterian church and at the time was located near a large spring on the well known Ashcraft farm about three miles east of Mint Hill.

The first church was destroyed by fire and soon thereafter the congregation constructed another crude church on the site of the present-day church in Mint Hill. Because it was under the presbytery in Philadelphia, Pa., they gave

¹John Foard was a surveyor by trade and according to the N. C. Colonial records was engaged by the Provincial Legislature to survey the road between Charlotte and Wadesboro, now known as Lawyers Road.

²When John Foard settled for a few years in Rowan county he was appointed by the royal governor, William Tryon, to service as vestryman for St. Luke's parish at Salisbury "until there shall be an Act passed by the Assembly for choosing a vestryman on the same footing as in England"; this appointment was recommended by a petition of approximately 200 citizens of the parish, but upon his removal to Mecklenburg he joined up with the Presbyterians inasmuch as the Church of England was not then established in Mecklenburg.—Vol. 8, p. 155, N. C. Colonial Records.

the new church the name of the "city of brotherly love."

(The organization of this church is recorded as one of seven established in Mecklenburg by the noted Presbyterian minister—Alexander Craighead — later buried in Sugaw Creek church cemetery.)

Aside from the honor John Foard bestowed upon himself when he signed the Mecklenburg Declaration, he is best remembered for the services he rendered this church. A bronze plaque has been mounted in the church in his honor as one of the three members of the church who signed the Mecklenburg Declaration.

Since Philadelphia church is an offspring of the Rocky Springs or Clear Creek church of the early 1760s, the original cemetery at Rocky Springs is recognized today as the first of three cemeteries under the supervision of Philadelphia church; it is also considered as the burial place of John Foard, together with two of his compatriots who signed the Declaration—John Queary and Adam Alexander.

John Foard's grave, however, is not now marked. No one even knows where it is located in the cemetery. Certain of his descendants state nevertheless that he once had a grave stone. He could have well afforded one; for he was known as a man of considerable wealth. Strange as it may be, though, tradition has it that his tombstone was removed many years ago—long before the birth of any of his present-day descendants, possibly by some unknown neighbor, and used as a hearth stone. Now, the human mind is a strange instrumentality. It can inspire some persons to commit any act. Here, indeed, is one that over taxes the human imagination.

Who knows but that today John Foard's old gravestone still serves some one in that area as a hearth stone?

John Foard had only two children—Zebulon and Elizabeth, according to his will on file in the Charlotte courthouse.

When his will was probated in April, 1795, will book C, page 72, he bequeathed the home and household property to his wife, Katherine, together with several slaves and it was his request that she be furnished with 20 bushels of wheat, 20 bushels of corn and 400 pounds of bacon from the farm.

The cattle, sheep and much other property and slaves with "crops already in the ground," were divided, one-third each, with her and the children—Zebulon and Elizabeth, then the wife of William Morris, and upon Katherine's death the entire estate was willed to the two children.

The will in no manner mentions either of his brothers or any of their children.

William Robb and James Wilson were appointed executors of the estate.

Willed down from one generation to another, a portion of the original Selwyn tract is owned today by one of the "Signer's" descendants—Mrs. Louise Morris Stephens.

When the first State convention was called in 1776 to formulate a constitution, John Foard was named as one of the 18 magistrates of the county—a list that reads quite like a roll call of the Declaration signers, all indicating the high repute all of the patriots who risked their lives and property when they signed that historic document.

The full extent of John Foard's military service during the Revolution is not well known; it has been recorded, though, he was a member of the Charles Polk's dragon in the Raft Swamp expedition, indicating he was an able horseman. He had served in the militia with Capt. Polk when Adam Alexander was the leader. He may have accompanied them on other expeditions; for it is known Capt. Polk and Colonel Alexander had participated in several expeditions against the Tories and Cherokee Indians. No record has been found if he ever applied for a pension.

He was perhaps never injured and served simply as a good citizen and patriot.

John Foard's descendants have recorded the tradition that when General Nathaniel Greene was ordered South to succeed the unfortunate General Gates (who lost the battle at Camden) in 1780 he was entertained on the Foard plantation near Mint Hill.

Zebulon Foard did not long survive his illustrious father. He died in February, 1808. When he passed away his extensive estate was willed to his wife, Elizabeth, and children—John, Reuben, Ezekiel, Elizabeth and William, several of whom were still under legal age; so he provided for their school attendance "before they are sent out to trade."

His will is on file in the Charlotte courthouse and, odd as the fact may be, after making certain provisions for his four sons, he provided that each was to have 50 acres of the original plantation, but to indicate his impartiality he requested they "cast lot" for the choice tracts.

Zebulon's sister, Elizabeth, also had a number of children and many Mecklenburgians trace their ancestry to her.

Both son and daughter of the Signer were laid away in the Rocky Springs cemetery, again by inference indicating it was the final resting place of their father with perhaps 50 or more members of the church he had helped establish.

"Time marches on," wrote one of John Foard's descendants a few years ago, "and we naturally love to look back over the past and watch the progress of his descendants. Each of us have a responsibility to perform. We must ever press forward in order that when we have departed our descendants, too, may be proud of us as we are of our ancestor—John Foard."

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER XVI

John Flennekin

John Flennekin, farmer, soldier, magistrate—all honorable trades to be sure, was one of the signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence of May 20, 1775, and a valuable citizen of his adopted county.

Time and circumstances, however, have so confused the genealogical phase of his life it has been quite difficult after these 200 years to obtain a clear picture of the basic facts of his life.

There are some indications he returned to his native Pennsylvania in his later years or lost his life in Mecklenburg through a horse accident some time before his three score and ten years had run.

His descendants and allied families have nevertheless preserved considerable data concerning his life, although quite complicated in many respects; hence, due in part to the use of the name "John" in the various Flennekin families at that time, it was not until a few days ago we could establish the exact identity of the Signer.

This riddle of 150 years or more was settled by Mrs. Thos. L. Millwee, noted Charlotte genealogist, when she

discovered that an estate administration bond, written and signed by John Flennekin, had recently been found among the papers of the grandfather of Mrs. Harris Barnhardt of Davidson.

This old bond, beautifully preserved, is dated January 10, 1783, and signed by John Flennekin, David Flennekin and Samuel Flennekin to quote: "all sons of James Flennekin, deceased," and James Flennekin, "son of William Flennekin, deceased," wherein they bound themselves in the sum of 2,000 English pounds.

The signature of John Flennekin on this bond is exactly the same as on the Declaration and also as it appears in the minutes of the Mecklenburg County Court where following the Revolution he served as a judge with a number of his Declaration compatriots.

(This bond, incidentally, has been photoprinted and filed in the courthouse for all the world to see.)

When the Mecklenburg County court terms of those early days were over each month or the Quarterly Sessions ended all the judges were required to sign the minutes and lo, John Flennekin's name, as on the Declaration, stood out in the same distinctive signature.

Because so many members of the Flennekin families have attained such high places in the affairs of the nation it has been deemed advisable, in view of the fact several claim descent from him, to let their descendants give the genealogical history of the clan.

(The name "Flennekin" is the Scotch manner of spelling the Irish name "Flannagan.")

Mrs. Leroy Flennekin of Charlotte has furnished this writer with a brief history of the Flennekin family, prepared for her several years ago by Mrs. Ethel Flennekin of Hamburg, N. Y., and reads as follows:

"About the year 1730 a colony of Scotch-Irish natives of Tryone, Ulster, Ireland, set sail for America. They landed

at the port of Philadelphia. Numbered among this contingent of emigrants were several members of the Flennekin family and many close friends and relatives. Among this group seeking new fields of endeavor and progress in America were three brothers who in the course of a few years located near the present-day city of Charlotte, N. C.

"One of these brothers was James Flennekin who prior to his removal to North Carolina had married Jean Glaspie (some times spelled Gillespie) and to this couple were born nine children:

"Mary, born May 15, 1731; Elizabeth, March 12, 1734; William, June 11, 1736; Ester, January 12, 1738; Sarah, May 12, 1740; James, March 30, 1742; JOHN, born March 7, 1744; Samuel, 1746; David, July 13, 1748."

(The names of James and Jean and their sons—John, William, Samuel and David appear several times in the Mecklenburg land deeds registry.)

"The names of all of the children," wrote Mrs. Flennekin, "were taken from the family Bible under date of June 12, 1775, but unfortunately this Bible some time later was destroyed by fire when the home of a relative was burned."

The above remarks prove quite clearly John Flennekin, son of James, was the "Signer" and it also confirms the relationship noted in the estate bond. The name of the lady he married, however, is not known. He nevertheless had a son, named John Oliver Flennekin, who incidentally appears to have been confused by local historians with his father.

John O., born in 1784, is said to have married Mary Reid, daughter of David Reid, who had been an officer on General Thomas Sumter's staff—the note defender of upper South Carolina during the Revolution, and in whose army John, the "Signer" is said to have served as a soldier.

John O.'s wife, Mary, was buried in Providence Presbyterian Church yard, age 47; she died February 10, 1823, as the tombstone reads—quite clearly not the wife of the

“Signer” who was born in 1744—and it also states she was the “wife of John O. Flennekin.”

The fact may be stated at this point in the biography of John, “the Signer,” son of James, that one John Flennekin was buried in 1808 in a country cemetery near Knoxville, Tenn., according to information furnished this writer by David McWhorter, noted genealogist of Bethel, N. C., and on his tombstone appears these words: “Son of the Signer of the Mecklenburg Protest.”

Could this have been John O.?

The circumstance is one of the earliest known reference to the Mecklenburg Declaration. And it is carved in stone—cut over ten years before Thomas Jefferson put a doubt in the mind of some non-thinkers as to the actuality of the Mecklenburg Declaration.

Next to the grave of John at Knoxville is the grave of Samuel Flennekin—perhaps, his uncle, for it is known his father had a brother, Samuel.

Since we do not know anything about the “Signer’s” marriage or that he had any children other than John O., it must be a mere conjecture the “Knoxville Samuel” was John O.’s brother.

The “Knoxville John” could have been the husband of Mary Reid Flennekin. This inference, however, requires a certain amount of conjecture, thus: John O. and Mary may have moved to Knoxville following the death of his father—the date of which is not known; John died and was buried there and in order to live with her own people Mary returned to Mecklenburg and survived John O. until 1823.

The data concerning the John buried in 1808 near Knoxville was obtained from an old volume on “Tennessee Tombstones and Inscriptions” by Mrs. Acklen, but this writer has been informed by Roscoe C. d’Armand, noted genealogist of Knoxville, that the tombstone mentioned by her was not found in 1938 when a group of students transcribed all

stones in the cemetery—known as the Cunningham graveyard, and is possibly so buried today it cannot be found.

Mr. d'Armand then informs this writer Mrs. Acklen indicates it was Samuel whose grave stone was so marked instead of John; if John, the Signer, had a son Samuel we do not know. This Samuel was either his uncle or a son of John who returned to Pennsylvania; hence, the riddle at Knoxville is still unsolved.

Incidentally, Mr. d'Armand further states Mary and Ester Flennekin, sisters of John, son of James, married brothers—Thomas and John Dermon; that Thomas died in Mecklenburg, whereupon John Dermon moved to Tennessee with his own children and several children of his deceased brother; he also states Samuel Flennekin, son of James and Jean Gillespie (parents of John, the Signer,) in 1792 moved to Tennessee.

Samuel died in 1811 and was laid away in the Cunningham cemetery; hence, it would appear he was perhaps an uncle of the "Knoxville John" who may have been John O., husband of Mary Reid, but it may be the deceased Samuel was a brother of the "Signer" of whose own family we have no record.

The key to this riddle may still be in Knoxville where so many members of the family settled.

Mr. d'Armand has stated John, Jr. (John O.) died in 1852 which cannot be possible if Mary had "wife of John Oliver Flennekin" inscribed on her gravestone in 1823, but his research leads him to believe the "Signer" was John, son of James and Jean Glaspy (Gillespie) Flennekin.

If the "Knoxville John" was not the son of "the Signer" whose son was he? The fact is, he should have known if his father was the signer, although he was not born until ten years after the Declaration was signed."

There is no evidence the "Signer" was buried in Providence cemetery. Neither the "Signer" or John O. filed a will

in Mecklenburg. Both must have been men of prominence and some wealth. Why they could not have had their burial place marked by a tombstone is a riddle within itself. If John O.'s wife survived him, she no doubt would have marked his grave. (She may have done so at Knoxville.)

The Flennekins owned considerable land in the Sharon section of Mecklenburg.

Hon. Samuel Flennekin of Washington, Pa., where a number of Flennekins have lived well over 200 years, has informed this writer that he has endeavored for fifty years to solve the riddle of the "Signer." The recently discovered estate bond, however, clearly shows he was a son of James and his signature on the Declaration and the Mecklenburg court records are identical.

He has quite uniquely in his research termed one John "the Southern Judge" and another "the Northern Judge."

Until the estate bond was discovered recently it was thought possible that John, one of the original brothers, was the signer; but he was born no doubt within the first decade or two of the 1700s and was the Signer's uncle.

Miss Louise Cummins of Chicago has informed this writer that the original John had a son, named John, born in 1745, and it was thought he was the "Signer."

He first married Miss----- Rankin (no history of her); they had three children—Samuel, born April 28, 1774, moved to Ohio and became a judge; Dorcus, married Benjamin Jennings in Pennsylvania; Adley, who remained with his mother's people in Mecklenburg when his father moved back to Pennsylvania to administer the estate of his brother, James."

Upon John's return to Pennsylvania, his Mecklenburg wife having died, he married Hannah McClelland and to them were born nine children: Andrew settled in Ohio; Mary J. (Polly); Mifflin, married Mary McClelland; Tirzah, no record; Rebecca, never married; John N. went to

Iowa; Robert P. who became minister to Denmark during the administration of President James Buchanan¹; Isaac, settled in Arkansas; Hannah, married Rev. Asa Brooks, a Presbyterian minister.

Miss Cummins descended from this John through his son, James Mifflin, one of whose descendants was Governor Albert Cummins of Iowa, later U. S. Senator.

She gives the date of birth of this John as 1745; he died in Greene county, Pa., in 1810.

(Efforts are under way to obtain his signature to compare it with the signer of the estate bond in 1783.)

Mr. Roscoe d'Armand of Knoxville further reports on the biographical aspect of "John of Mecklenburg," as follows:

"John Flennekin, son of James and Jane Gillespie Flennekin, was born March 7, 1774, in Pennsylvania prior to his parents' removal to North Carolina. His family settled on McAlpin creek in Sharon township. John received a good education for his day. In May, 1775, Col. Thomas Polk, commander of the county, issued orders to his captains to have each of their companies to send two delegates to a convention to be held in Charlotte. John Flennekin and Neill Morrison (also a signer) were sent as delegates from Capt. James Jack's company . . . Later, when Francis Marion (sic) was commissioned to raise a force of loyal men in the district, John served under him as a private soldier.

"He served as a magistrate and member of the county court after the Revolution and was also on the State bench several years. He was an elder in the Providence Presbyterian church and was one of the most advanced farmers of his day. He was especially fond of horses and had many blooded animals. He was killed one Sunday by being thrown

¹Later advices indicates James K. Polk was the President, but Buchanan was a Pennsylvanian and no doubt favored a citizen of his own State.

from his horse on the way to church . . . about the year 1810 or possibly August, 1821-22."

Mr. d'Armand then confuses John with the John born in 1745 and gives the names of his children exactly as named by Miss Cummins previously noted; also he married Hannah McClelland who with John McClelland was appointed administrator of the Pennsylvania John's estate in 1810.

One phase of the Mecklenburg John's life developed by Mr. d'Armand requires an historical note: General Thomas Sumter (rather than Gen. Francis Marion) had defeated several British detachments in several minor battles, but at Fishing Creek in Chester County, S. C., he was defeated; his troops scattered and many of them found refuge in Mecklenburg county.

When his new army was formed it is believed John, "the Signer," and a number of other Mecklenburgians joined him, thus clarifying the occasion for his son, John O., marrying David Reid's daughter, Mary.

Until evidence to the contrary is obtained it appears indisputable John, son of James, was the signer of the Declaration and all efforts should be made to trace his marriage and children and his burial place in order to more thoroughly separate him from the other John Flennekings.

REFERENCES:

The life history of this Signer has been obtained for the most part from various descendants of the Flennekin family, as outlined in the sketch, courthouse records, information furnished the author by Hon. Samuel P. Flennekin, Washington, Pa., North Carolina Colonial Collected Records; the minutes of the county court of Revolutionary War period; Davis McWhorter of Bethel, N. C.; cemetery records, roster of Revolutionary War soldiers and early Mecklenburg historians.

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER XVII

Neill Morrison

By Alice Caldwell Davidson, Descendant of this Signer through his daughter, Jane, and her husband, Thomas Alexander.¹

Neill Morrison, one of the signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, was the son of James Morrison who according to early records was a native of Scotland and migrated to America in the early 1700s.

Born in the year 1697, James Morrison first settled in Philadelphia where it is believed he was engaged in the mercantile business.²

His son, Neill Morrison, "The Signer," was born there in 1728 and married a young lady of New Castle, Delaware

¹Jane and Major Thomas Alexander's son, Thomas, Jr., was educated at Princeton for the ministry; went to Florida soon after its purchase from Spain; first missionary in that territory; settled near St. Augustine; later gave land from his plantation near Madison for first Presbyterian church and there it was this writer's grandmother was reared following the death of her parents and upon the death of Rev. Thomas Alexander it was necessary to guard his body against marauding Indians.

²Lyman Draper manuscripts.

—Annabelle Johnston, the daughter of William and Mary Johnston.³

Neill and Annabelle Morrison named two of their children after her parents—a son, William, and a daughter, Jane, and in turn William Morrison named his son William Johnston Morrison.

Some few years before the Revolutionary War, Neill Morrison, with his growing family, and his father, James Morrison, moved to the wilderness known today as Mecklenburg county and settled on Four-Mile creek in section known as Providence township.

James Morrison's activities following his arrival here are not well known, but his son, Neill, then perhaps 30 years of age, evidently at once entered into the political, church and military affairs of the county.

Mecklenburg historian, Lyman Draper, wrote of him:

“Neill Morrison soon commanded respect. He was chosen one of the members of the Mecklenburg Convention of May 19-20, 1775. He earnestly engaged in the military service of the county, commanding a company in Gen. Rutherford's campaign against the Cherokee Indians . . . He was also chosen one of the magistrates of the county.”

Neill Morrison's distinctive signature on the Declaration and public records clearly indicate he possessed an excellent education and quite apparently realized the value of a good education; for he sent his young son, William, to Princeton or the College of New Jersey, as Princeton was then called.

The youth, incidentally, was even then (age 15 years) a good patriot, having no doubt imbibed a love of freedom from his father, and soon after the start of the Revolutionary War he purchased himself a rifle and returned home. Just when he entered the service of his country is not known, but it has been recorded he saw service on Sulli-

³Note from Miss Hattie Alexander.

van's Island. He was also a soldier in General Gates army at Camden, S. C.—the most disastrous defeat sustained by the Carolinians.

William was wounded there by a musket ball and taken prisoner.

When his mother learned of his misfortune, she and one of her daughters made their way to Camden and obtained his release from prison. They then conveyed him to Charlotte. Upon his arrival here he was attended by Dr. Henderson who removed the ball and in due course William recovered.⁴

The men of Neill Morrison's family were not the only members to participate in the patriotic affairs of the times.

His daughter, Jane, then 17 years of age, was one of several young ladies of Charlotte who signed a resolution wherein they stated they would refuse the addresses of the youths of the town who had not volunteered their services to the military authorities.

The South Carolina and American General Gazette of Charleston under date of February 9, 1776, one of the few papers in the Carolinas at that time, wrote of this unique event, as follows:

"The young ladies of the best families of Mecklenburg North Carolina, have entered into a voluntary association that they will not receive the address of any young gentlemen of the place, except the brave volunteers who served in the expedition to South Carolina and assisted in the subdueing of the Scovelites.

"The ladies being of the opinion that such persons as stay loitering at home, when important calls of the county demands their military services abroad, must certainly be destitute of that manliness of sentiment, that brave, manly spirit that would qualify them to be the defenders and guardians of the fair sex.

⁴Lyman Draper manuscripts.

"The ladies of the adjoining county of Rowan have desired the plan for a similar association."⁵

Neill Morrison evidently approved of his daughter's independent and patriotic spirit.

Whether or not Jane had settled upon the man she was to marry—Thomas Alexander—is not known, but he certainly did not stay "loitering at home." He was on the other hand one of the young men who had accompanied his father-in-law-to-be, Neill Morrison, to the Scovelite battle at Ninety-Six, S. C.

Eventually appointed major, he was the son of Benjamin and Susannah Polk Alexander and served in the various battles during the War. His loyalty to the independence cause was so well known that when Lord Cornwallis and his "Red Coats" were approaching Charlotte he was given the task of guarding the magazine at Charlotte.

He was also with Gen. Davie in the battle at Hanging Rock wherein so many Mecklenburgians were engaged.⁶

(When the May 20th celebration was held in the year 1844 Major Alexander, then 91 years of age, was the only one of the county's three surviving veterans of the Revolution able to attend.)⁷

Neill Morrison's will is on file at the Charlotte Courthouse. It was written January 10, 1784, a short time before his death in September, 1784. The will was witnessed by Samuel and Thomas Downs, sons of one of his compatriots and neighbors in Providence township—Henry Downs, who was also one of the signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration.

Neill Morrison was buried in Providence church cemetery beside his father, James Morrison. The father and son

⁵Lyman Draper manuscripts.

⁶Lyman Draper manuscripts.

⁷Hunter's Sketches.

shared a common tombstone on which the following inscriptions are carved:

Here lies the body of James Morrison, Departed this life April 15, 1778, Age 81 years.

And

Neill Morrison, who deceased Sept. 13, 1784, Age 56 years.

Their glass is run

Their work is done

And they lie underground

Entombed in clay

Until the day.

They hear the trumpet sound.

Neil Morrison's name first appears in the land deeds records at the Courthouse on September 20, 1779, when he bought 27 acres on McAlpin creek; again, on March 24, 1780, at which time he bought 102 acres on the creek, both State grants Nos. 32 and 102, respectively; yet his father's name appears many times on the land deed records, much of which was inherited by Neill.

"The men of that day were at pains to thank the Lord for His mercies and blessings before they disposed of their worldly goods. Accordingly Neill Morrison feelingly expressed his thanks for having still a sound mind and good health."⁸

The first item of his will has to do with unworldly things:

"The solemn moment being come my body I commit to the dust in the hope of a joyful resurrection and my soul into my Heavenly Father's hands through the spirit of my sweet Lord Jesus Christ whose it is by a dear bought purchase, my body to be decently buried if at home and in a Christian like manner . . . but if abroad the God in

⁸Dr. J. B. Alexander's Reminiscences.

whom I trust will superintend the solemnity in His gracious providence to whom I am not to prescribe.”⁹

He bequeathed to “my dear and loving wife, Annabelle Morrison her widow’s third and in addition the Negro woman called Rose . . . to be at her own disposal at her death.”

To his daughter, Hannah Starr, he made a special bequest and left the remainder of his estate, real and personal, to be equally divided between his seven remaining children: Margaret McKee, Jane, William, Ann, Alexander, Amelia and James. Evidently his daughters, Mrs. Starr and Mrs. McKee, had already received satisfactory marriage settlements, for Mrs. Starr did not share in the general division; he also directed that “Margaret McKee who hath received a great part already . . . must settle for what she hath received as so much of her part.”

As executor of his will he appointed his “dearly beloved wife.”

The Signer’s eldest son, William, who was wounded at Camden, became a prominent physician and was later elected, as a Federalist, representative to the North Carolina Legislature in 1796.

William married Susannah Houston and, according to his mother’s will, left eight children: Hannah, James, Neill, William Johnston, Nancy, Polly, Henry Downs and Susannah.

(That a rather close friendship existed between the families of the two Declaration Signers from Providence township may be inferred from the fact that Henry Downs’ two sons, Samuel and Thomas, witnessed Neill Morrison’s will, and that Neill’s eldest son named one of his sons for Henry Downs.)

Neill Morrison was also a close neighbor of John Flennekin, another signer of the Declaration; tradition has it

⁹Will Book B, p.64, Courthouse.

they were members of the same militia company which was captained by the noted James Jack who carried the Mecklenburg Declaration to the North Carolina delegates to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia and Neill and Flennekin represented Jack's company in the convention at Charlotte on May 19th-20th.

William Morrison, son of Neill, died November 1, 1806, aged 45 years, and is buried in Providence church cemetery where his wife, Susannah, who survived him until September, 1823, was also buried.

Alexander Morrison, second son of Neill Morrison, was elected to the North Carolina Legislature as a Republican (as the Democrats were then known) and served 1801-1803; he died in December, 1806, and is buried at Providence.

His mother mentions his daughter, Louisa.

James Morrison, Neill's youngest child, died October 15, 1806, age 32 years, and was laid away in Providence.

His mother's will mentions three children: Peggy, Annabelle and a third child whose name is not legible.

All of Neill's sons, then, died in 1806, within three months of each other, indicating the possibility they were carried away by an epidemic.

Neill's daughter, Jane, who married Maj. Thomas Alexander, had eight children: Morrison, born Sept. 17, 1784; Albert, born Nov. 30, 1786; Thomas, January 19, 1788; Amelia, November 22, 1789; Susannah, August 21, 1791; Margaret, May 20, 1793; Annabella, January 27, 1795; Edwin, December 28, 1797; Benjamin, April 15, 1800.

Jane and Maj. Thomas Alexander were buried in the second grave yard of Sugaw Creek Presbyterian church.

Annabella, usually referred to as "Ann" to distinguish her from her mother, married John Houston and Amelia married John Stitt.

Neill Morrison's widow, Annabella, was 69 years of age at the time of her death in 1818 and upon her tombstone in

Providence church cemetery has the following inscription:

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. They rest from their labors and their works do follow them."

Certainly her good heart and her piety speaks through her will in the thoughtfulness and concern for the religious education of her grandchildren, for she provided for the gift to each of the twelve children of her deceased sons . . . "one pocket Bible . . . which Bibles shall be delivered them at such times as my said executors may judge prudent and proper, at the least to all such of them as I may not give Bibles myself between this time and my decease as God may spare and enable me."

Since she was spared for another ten years after she wrote her will in 1808, probably she did see to the presentation of these Bibles herself.

She did not mention the numerous children of her daughters, having probably already provided them with Bibles and a spiritual education, particularly those of Amelia and John Stitt with whom she resided in her last years.

Between her three daughters, Amelia, Jane and Ann, she divided her estate with one exception and in that her kind heart speaks again cross the years, for 34 years before Neill Morrison had bequeathed her a Negro servant called Rose, Annabella's will directs:

"Concerning my said old faithful servant, Rose, my will is that she not be sold; but shall be kept by my daughters in as easy circumstances as the nature of slavery will permit of . . ."

Neill Morrison married well when he won the hand and heart of Annabelle Johnston and their numerous descendants in Mecklenburg today are truly proud of the patriotic, religious, gentle and domestic home life that has come down to them from this happy couple these 200 years.

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER XVIII

Waightstill Avery

Extraordinary man that he was, it was but natural that Waightstill Avery—signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, should become one of North Carolina's leading statemen of that period.

He was born May 1, 1741, at Groton, Conn., New London County, of pure English Puritan stock.

He was the fifth generation of his family then in America.

His father was Humphrey Avery, son of Samuel, son of Capt. James, son of Christopher Avery.

His mother was Jerusha Morgan Avery of Groton.

The first Avery to come to America was the Signer's great-great-great grandfather, Christopher Avery, who it has been said came over from England in 1630 in the group of Puritans headed by the noted John Winthrop.

Waightstill first attended the Samuel Seabury school in Groton; later, he moved up to Nassau Hall, afterwards called University of New Jersey, but known today as Princeton University. He graduated in the class of 1766, as

he so specifically stated in his will drawn 50 years later; he stood at the head of his class and was chosen to deliver the salutatory address.

Upon his graduation from Nassau he remained with the institution one year as an instructor.

(Matriculating at Nassau that year were Ephraim Brevard, David Reese and Hezekiah James Balch—all signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration, and it has been stated they probably were instrumental in Waightstill moving to Mecklenburg).

Avery resigned his post at Nassau in 1767 and moved to Maryland. He there studied law under Littleton Dennis. He remained with Judge Dennis almost two years. We next find a record of him in Salisbury, N. C., where the court records show he was admitted to practice there in 1769.

He then entered upon the court circuit which included Charlotte, Wadesboro and other county seat towns in this section of the province.

He first made his home in Salisbury, it can well be conjectured, for it has been recorded he was chosen to represent the Crown there and also in 1772 was selected to represent Rowan county in the Provincial Legislature at New Bern.

Some time after his term in the Legislature was over, Waightstill took up his abode in Charlotte, but continued to practice in the courts of the circuit; still not married, he went to board in the noted Hezekiah Alexander's fort-like rock home which stands today on the grounds of the Methodist Home for the Aged on Eastway Drive—now preserved and conducted as a pre-Revolutionary War shrine by the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Avery was living with the Alexanders when the May 19-20th Declaration convention was called; that he was a member of the militia was not likely; hence, it would appear that he was invited to attend the convention and was ac-

cordingly present as a guest of his host. The fact has been recorded, though, that he had early in life become imbued with a belief in human freedom, politically as well as in a religious sense, and no doubt addressed the delegates upon the evils of taxation without representation and the impositions of the tyrannical Governor William Tryon for whom Charlotte's main street was named and also the oppressing laws of Governor Josiah Martin who a few months after the Declaration sought safety on an English ship and finally sailed for New York City.

He had once been a Crown attorney and perhaps had found that office distasteful; for it was about that time (1774) that he resigned and moved to Charlotte.

The extent to which he participated in the proceedings of the convention, of course, can only be conjectured; yet it is known he signed the Declaration and soon thereafter was named as one of the members of the Council of State.

Certain of his patriotism and integrity, he was later selected to represent Mecklenburg in the constitutional convention at Halifax in 1776 and was chosen chairman of the committee appointed to prepare a draft of a constitution. An examination of the handwriting of the original document by Governor David Swain 50 years later disclosed the fact the greater part of the constitution later adopted was in Avery's handwriting.

Waightstill was some time later engaged to visit certain leaders in South Carolina to obtain their support in defense of the province against the British and to purchase 2000 pounds of powder.

When the officers were selected for the newly established state of North Carolina, (1776), Waightstill was appointed attorney-general—the first in North Carolina.

Some time after this honor was bestowed upon him, Avery concluded Mecklenburg was at too great a distance from the State's center of population; he thereupon moved

over to the state capital at New Bern, although it is believed he retained his legal residence in Charlotte; for in 1781 when Cornwallis invaded Charlotte he ordered Waightstill's office and books destroyed.

Soon after Avery's arrival in New Bern, he met and married a young widow—Leah Francks, daughter of Captain Yelverton Probart of that section.

They were married October 3, 1778.

If not because of ill health, then because of a fear of malaria in that area, Avery decided to move to the mountains. He was then a colonel in the Jones county militia, but following his decision to leave the low lands of the coastal area he resigned and purchased a tract of land on the Catawba river in the present-day county of Burke, Morganton, the county seat. The land was owned by "Hunting John McDowell." Upon an eminence overlooking the river stood the home, called "Swan Ponds"—about three miles west of Morganton. He first moved his family there; then certain the war was over (1781) he went to "Swan Ponds" to live a long and happy life.

The original home no longer exists, but was replaced by a semi-Georgian red-brick residence and now is owned oddly enough, not by his direct descendants, but 4th generation relatives of his brother, the noted Rev. Isaac Avery.

Waightstill made his home at Swan Ponds the rest of his life and is said to have furnished it with the finest library in western North Carolina. He continued to practice law and traveled the entire western circuit which included the "Western District" as Tennessee was called until North Carolina ceded the "district" in 1796 to the Federal government in return for its cancellation of the state's federal debt incurred during the Revolution.

He passed away in his home on March 3, 1821, following a stroke of apoplexy and in accordance with specific

provisions set out in his will he was laid away near the home in a specially prepared sepulcher.

Waightstill Avery's will is one of the most unique ever filed in western North Carolina. He first expressed his appreciation to Providence for the worldly goods he had been permitted to accumulate; he then stated briefly that all property and lands he had acquired were obtained, not by gambling, betting or horse racing, but rather through thrift, good judgment and hard work. He then admonished his heirs to conserve and use their inheritance for themselves and the good of mankind.

Following this fatherly advice, and all of his possessions having been disposed of, he inscribed a beautiful paragraph for his beloved wife—Leah; he expressed the deep love he had for her and that he was grateful Providence had given her as his life's companion and the mother of his children and that he could not believe the severance of their life here on earth was the end of all things.

He appointed his only son, Isaac Thomas Avery, as executor of his will which bequeathed thousands upon thousands of acres of land to his children.

He is said to have owned at different times at least "50,000 acres in North Carolina and Tennessee," said one of his descendants, although the major portion, as indicated in his will, had been distributed at times to his children before his death, perhaps at their marriage.

The original will is on file at the courthouse at Morganton, N. C.

Waightstill Avery had four children—one son, Isaac Thomas, born September 22, 1785, through whom his line has been extended these 200 years; his first child was a daughter, Polly Mira, born August 4, 1779; Elizabeth (called Betsy), born August, 1782, and Selina Louisa, born October 27, 1788.

Isaac, his son, married Harriet Eloise Erwin, daughter of William Willoughby Erwin; Polly Mira married Caleb Poor and later Jacob Summey; Betsy married Wm. B. Lenoir; Selina Louisa married his brother, Thomas Lenoir, both sons of General William Lenoir.

While making his home in Charlotte, Avery purchased 6½ acres and lot No. 9 on Tryon street in Charlotte in 1776; he also purchased 5 acres or ten lots, but the location is not indicated by the deed on file in the courthouse; in the year 1777 he obtained 12 lots on Tryon street and again in 1819 he purchased 14 lots here, several of which, according to his will, were still in his possession when he wrote his will.

Waightstill seemingly intended to withdraw from politics, but later was elected several times from Burke County to the House of Representatives at New Bern and once to the State Senate. He never-the-less still found time to travel the western court circuit.

Some few years after he had settled at Swan Ponds, Avery was attending court at Jonesboro, then in the "Western District" (now Tennessee) and one day found the opposing attorney in one of his cases was a former fellow countain, young Andrew Jackson—then only 21 years of age. Eloquent and some times caustic in his remarks before the bar, Waightstill spoke in a manner which irked the youthful Jackson who stewed and harrassed himself all during the day and next day when court adjourned Andrew sent Waightstill a challenge for a duel.

Quoted below is the challenge verbatim—now in possession of one of his descendants; and dated August 12, 1788:

"Sir: When a man's feelings and character are injured he ought to seek a speedy redress. You received a few lines from me yesterday. Undoubtedly you understand me. My character you have injured; and further you have insulted me in the presence of a court and a large audience. I there-

fore call upon you as a gentleman to give me satisfaction for the same; and further call upon you to give me an answer immediately without equivocation and I hope you can do without dinner until the business is done; for it is consistent with the character of a gentleman whom when he injures a man to make a speedy reparation; therefore I hope you will not fail in meeting me this day.

From your humble servant, Andrew Jackson.

P.S.:

Col. Avery. This evening after court adjournment."

This incident in Waightstill's life is recorded in the noted genealogical history of "The Averys of Groton," (Conn.,) and it is further stated that Jackson fired first; his bullet missed its mark, some thought by intention. Avery then declined to fire and immediately walked to his youthful opponent (Jackson was born in 1767 and Avery in 1741) and offered his hand and a bit of fatherly advice upon the control of one's emotions and the seemingly knavish words of attorneys before a jury.

(All of which, as a subsequent duel revealed, had but little effect upon the fiery-tempered Jackson).¹

Waightstill is said to have been responsible for the clause in the first state's constitution which requested the Legislature be required to provide for the establishment of a university for the State and as a consequence it is well known North Carolina established the first state owned university in the Union.

Avery was in other respects a methodical person. He kept a full diary of his early days in North Carolina. This document is now on file in the library at Chapel Hill where

¹Avery had declined about a year previously Jackson's request for permission to study law in his office.

the State honored him with a memorial for his interest in education.

He was the only member of his family to come to North Carolina, although his brother, the Rev. Isaac Avery, lived and preached for many years in Southeastern Virginia; there are now nevertheless many descendants of this worthy Signer in Mecklenburg and other parts of the nation, all because of the providential preservation of one grandson—a soldier in the Civil War.

The Averys have always played an important part in the military affairs of our country—even before the Revolution and it is recorded in the family's genealogical history that seven Averys lost their lives in the defense of the fort at Groton.

Many of the Averys have attained national importance in many ways, not only in the male line, but the women folks, one of whom became the great grandmother of the famous John D. Rockefeller.

North Carolina forever honored Waightstill Avery when the Legislature gave the name of Avery to one of its 100 counties.

REFERENCES:

The information for this sketch of Waightstill Avery was obtained for the most part from the book, entitled "The Averys of Groton," loaned the author by Dr. E. W. Phifer of Morganton, N. C., excepting his will, land deeds and public life which was obtained from the North Carolina Colonial Records and tradition among his many descendants in the Charlotte area, all descendants through his son, Isaac Thomas Avery.

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER XIX

Wm. Graham

By Mrs. David E. (Corrine Rogers) Guyton
Descendant of William Graham Through His Son, William, Jr.

William Graham, generally designated as "The Signer," to distinguish him from the other William Grahams of old Mecklenburg, was of Scotch-Irish descent.

The Graham clan is an ancient brotherhood and of considerable historical importance. The first definite appearance of the name in history was in Scotland in 1143 when William de Graham signed the Holywood Charter.

The statement has been made the name came from an ancient Gaelic word, "Grauma," which means dark, morose, gloomy, stern; also, that it was adopted from the Scotch "gray hame" or gray home from the appearance of the home of the leader of the clan and was first used in the 11th century when only surnames were used, but the name has been written "Grim," Grimes, Grymes, Grayham, de Graham, de Graeme and Graeme.

The following lines from an old Scotch ballad describes a family trait that still clings to the Grahams where ever they may be found:

“From the greed of the Campbells,
From the anger of the Drummonds,
From the bluster of the Murrays,
From the pride of the Grahams,
Good Lord, deliver us.”

With the coming of John Knox and Presbyterianism in the mid-1500s, the Grahams became staunch Presbyterians.

William Graham, “The Signer,” better known in genealogical works as “William Graham of Mecklenburg,” to distinguish him from the noted Revolutionary War officer, Col. William Graham of old Tryon county, was born in Ulster, Ireland in 1740. His father was Richard Graham; his mother, Nancy, and with his brother, Joseph, William emigrated to Pennsylvania when very young; later, William moved to Mecklenburg and on June 2, 1768, married Margaret Graham of Rowan county where she was born in 1750, daughter of James, Jr., and Jane Graham.

(Her grandfather, James, Sr., was born in Inverrary, Argyllshire, Scotland, 1695; they left Scotland for America in 1713 and settled in Lancaster county, Pa., later moving to Rowan county where he died in 1782.)

William, “The Signer,” had the following brothers and sisters: John, Jane, James, Nancy, Molly, Sally, Richard and Joseph; his wife, Margaret, had the following brothers and sisters: Betty (who married General Griffith Rutherford); John, Richard, James, Jane, William, Rebecca and Mary Graham Jenkins.

Just what kinship if any existed between William and his wife, Margaret is not known, but since he was born in Ireland and her grandfather was from Scotland it was evidently quite remote.

William and Margaret Graham settled in the present Hopewell Presbyterian church section of Mecklenburg county and family tradition holds he was one of the church's founders and elders. His trade or occupation is not known, except he was a farmer throughout his life in Mecklenburg.

His will, probated in 1818, shows he had accumulated much property in the form of lands and slaves who were then considered of particular value.

Tradition has it he never allowed his slaves to work from Saturday noon until Monday and meticulous observer of the Sabbath that he was, all meals had to be prepared in the home on Saturday.

William, "The Signer," participated in the battle of King's Mountain, according to the D.A.R. Soldiers Record book, under Colonel Dixon, and his religion was said to have been so deeply rooted in his military career that it was primarily the fear of the coming of the "Established Church" that he took up arms against England.

The DAR Lineage Book states Margaret's brother, James, III, was a leader in the Regulator Movement in Orange and Alamance counties in 1771.

Hopewell Presbyterian church was founded in 1762, which indicates William Graham's early arrival in Mecklenburg and in its beautiful church yard he and his beloved wife, Margaret, are buried. Their tombstones are well preserved. The Mecklenburg chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution have placed upon William's grave a bronze marker to indicate he was a signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence and again his name appears on the list of all of the Hopewell signers in the vestibule of the old church.

The inscription on William Graham's grave stone reads as follows:

"Sacred to the memory of William Graham
Who departed this life July 17, 1818,

Age 78 years.

He was an affectionate husband and parent,

An obliging neighbor and useful citizen.

Life is at best a narrow bound

That Heaven allows to men and pains and sins run

Through the round of three score years and ten."

Upon Margaret's tomb is:

"Sacred to the memory of Margaret Graham,

Relict of William Graham,

Died May 12, A.D., 1821, age 71 years.

Tho' worms destroy my wasting flesh and

Crumble all my bones to dust,

My God shall make my frame anew

At the resurrection of the just."

This writer would, if she could, take a prolonged peep into the dim past when this splendid couple walked upon the earth.

It would, to be sure, disclose the beautiful life of the man and woman whose sterling worth is and has always been sincerely appreciated by their many hundreds of descendants, but, alas! the vision of man cannot extend beyond the realm of dreams and hope.

They left behind a family of nine sons, but no daughters, as follows: John, born March 3, 1769; James, June 26, 1771; Richard, February 7, 1773; Joseph, June 7, 1776; WILLIAM, (this writer's direct ancestor), August 8, 1780; Alexander, March 13, 1783; Samuel Eziekel, March 1, 1787; Griffith Rutherford, May 12, 1790.

John, James and Richard are thought to have gone early in life to either Sumner or Hickman county, Tennessee, to take over their father's land granted by the government; of the fourth son, Joseph, there is no record, but William, Jr., lived for a time in Rutherford county (where he married); he then moved to Gwinnett county, Ga., and thence to Tippah county, Miss.

Samuel, on January 9, 1811, was married to Abigail Shinn, daughter of Benjamin Shinn and Rebecca Carlock Shinn who reared a family of seven children.

Alexander, the 7th son, was a merchant in Augusta, Ga., where he married a widow—Mrs. DeAntiznac, who after Alexander's death married Governor Schley of Georgia.

Ezeikel married Thomasine Lewis, daughter of Major John Lewis, lived in Rutherford county, but later with their nine children moved to Georgia where he acquired considerable land and numerous slaves; he and his wife died in Adairville, Ga., he in 1863 and she in 1867.

All record of "The Signer's" 9th son, Griffith, has been lost.

William, 5th son of "The Signer" and Margaret Graham, was this writer's great-grandfather.

He married Susannah Twitty in 1806, daughter of Wm. Twitty of Kings Mountain battle fame in old Rutherford county; she was a niece of Susannah Twitty who married the Revolutionary colonel Wm. Graham of old Rutherford county, and had eight children, all born in Rutherford county before they moved to Georgia, as follows:

Elmira, born 1807, married Joseph Goodwin in Gwinnett county, Ga.; died there; had three children—Thomas, Caroline and Mary.

Margaret, born 1809, married Allen Weems, lived in Alabama; died there in 1894.

Wm. Lewis, born 1811, married Margaret Peace, 2nd wife, Martha O'Neal Northcross; died Tippah county, Miss., 1897.

Frances Rhodes Graham; born 1813, died Tippah county, 1875.

Sarah Talliaferro, died young, buried Weir's Chapel, Tippah, Miss.

Jane, born 1819, married Claiborne Thompson in Georgia.

James, married Amanda Lowry, sister of Governor Lowry of Mississippi; both died young, leaving three children.

Joseph, born 1825, married Louisa Harris Stowe; died 1851; buried at New Albany, Miss.

North Carolina lost many of its best citizens during a period of depression (about 1800-1840) at which time many of its substantial citizens moved into more western lands; then it was, following the death of William, "The Signer," in 1818, and his wife, Margaret, in 1821, many of their children emigrated to Georgia and Mississippi.

Public records through the years, as well as family tradition, offer abundant proof of their worth and integrity and many are the anecdotes and incidents that have come down through the long line of descendants of "The Signer" which indicated they inherited, not only "the pride of the Grahams," but practiced the aphorism on his tomb: "He was an obliging neighbor and useful citizen."

Their 5th son, William, was buried in Weir's Chapel cemetery near Ripley, Miss., which shows he was born March 13, 1778 and he died October 10, 1858 and in addition to his exemplary life it is stated on his tombstone "Son of the Signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence," thus indicating "The Signer's" son, as well as the rest of his numerous descendants even after almost 200 years, cherish the honor their ancestor bestowed upon himself when he signed the Mecklenburg Declaration.

REFERENCES:

References used in this sketch were: Family Bibles, county records in Mecklenburg, Georgia and Mississippi, various histories of Mecklenburg and the extensive genealogical research of William Spier Graham of Graysville, Ga., who has obtained an almost complete genealogical history of "The Signer" and his children, but space does not permit their inclusion in this sketch.—Mrs. Corrine Rogers Guyton.

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER XX

John Queary

John Queary, often spelled “Query” and “Quiery” in colonial times, was one of Mecklenburg’s substantial and patriotic citizens a decade or more before he signed the Declaration on May 20, 1775.

His origin and family history has been all but lost since his arrival in Mecklenburg approximately 200 years ago; yet the part he played in the events of those early days and the development of our county constitute an interesting chapter in the history of Mecklenburg.

We first find mention of him in the public records in the year 1766 when he was listed as a member of the Clear Creek militia company captained by the noted Adam Alexander—also a signer of the Declaration. He was then listed as a corporal. This post indicated he had been in the service some years.

The company had the official name “District No. 15” and included all of eastern Mecklenburg of that era as far as the Anson county line.

Like all of the other militia companies in the county, it had been formed primarily to protect the inhabitants against raids by marauding Indians.

Because much of this District included present-day Union county, (formed 1842) early chroniclers have recorded that John Queary lived in Union county and upon his death was buried in that county, but the site of his burial place is not known.

The first land deed recorded in his name is dated February 9, 1771. On that date he purchased two tracts of land—one of 30 acres, the other 73 acres, both adjoining “John Querys improvements,” as the deed reads.

The grantor was Abner Nash, later Governor of North Carolina, 1780-81, who had purchased it as a grant.

The phrase “John Query’s improvements” indicate he had already acquired the adjoining tract—located on “Goose Creek”—either through the “tomahawk” or squatter’s rights or by direct purchase without recording the deed.

That he had acquired it by “squatter’s rights” is indicated by another deed recorded June 5, 1774, from Governor Arthur Dobbs, 1754-65.

(Dobbs died while in office (1765) and was succeeded by the notorious Lord William Tryon.)

The deed was signed by Dobbs and his wife, Justina. The tract consisted of 130 acres on “Goose Creek and Rocky River.” The location thus mentioned is quite meaningless. Goose creek is a tributary of Rocky river and has its source on the land of present-day Philadelphia Presbyterian church in Mint Hill 10 miles or more from Rocky river—a point within the bounds of modern Mecklenburg county.

The “Signer” had thus no doubt acquired this tract of 130 acres in some manner prior to his purchase of the tracts from Abner Nash.

Governor Dobbs had obtained by grant from the King approximately 50,000 acres in that section of Mecklenburg

before he was appointed Governor. The tract had never been surveyed. No one knew its bounds; hence, like many of his neighboring settlers John Query had perhaps squatters on the land. The settlers had no means or way to determine who, if any one, owned the land.

They had no objection to paying for the land.

This fact is indicated by a petition the settlers filed with the Crown authorities in 1766. The petition requested the King's officers be restrained from pressing them for payment of back rents; it specifically stated they had agreed with Governor Dobbs to pay rents back to 1760, but the King's officers demanded rents back to 1756.

John Queary was one of the few settlers who did not sign this petition. He had no doubt already purchased his tract, but did not record the deed until 1774, which incidentally stated "no other quit rents would be required."

The tract cost him 13 pounds English money.

John Queary thus had the distinction of buying land, not from Lord Augustus Selwyn, who owned practically all of Mecklenburg, but rather from Governor Dobbs; Dobbs, however, contrary to the deeds from Lord Selwyn, demanded one-fifth of the gold and silver mined on the land—the first known recorded reference to the presence of gold in this area, but some years later gold was mined to such an extent here President Andrew Jackson in 1836 authorized the establishment of a gold mint at Charlotte.

John Queary also made other land purchases in the same area; hence, it is difficult to locate his homestead today because of the ill-defined metes and bounds, but it is quite possible the major portion of his land lay within the bounds of present-day Union county—formed 1842.

His association with Charlotte was limited because of the distance of 20 miles or more and until Charlotte was established in 1768 the county, almost a wilderness, con-

sisted of a patchwork of communities centering for the most part around a Presbyterian church.

John Queary was one of the founders of present-day beautiful Philadelphia church in Mint Hill.

The church, however, was not always so called. Founded as the Rocky Springs meeting house, it first stood about two miles east of its present site, and was so called from the nearby spring. His associates in the formation of this church were: Adam Alexander, John Foard, both signers of the Declaration; James Morris, Matthew Stuart and James Harris—believed to have also been a Declaration signer.

The land on which Rocky Springs meeting house stood was originally owned by Adam Alexander; he had sold it some time previously to Samuel Montgomery, but in the year 1780 the trustees mentioned purchased the plot of 3 acres, including the burial ground, and all were later buried in this cemetery—unless possibly John Query found a resting place some few miles within the present limits of Union county.

When the Rocky Springs meeting house was destroyed by fire about 1780 the congregation purchased the present-day site of Philadelphia church and due to the fact the church was first associated with the Philadelphia, Pa., presbytery it was given the name of the "city of brotherly love."

This church some few years ago memorialized the name of John Queary, John Foard and Col. Adam Alexander—all signers of the Declaration with a bronze plaque, placed in the vestibule of the church.¹

¹This plaque was erected under the auspices of the Mecklenburg of Independence chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and unveiled by Mrs. Ira L. Black, then Regent, of the 6th generation which reads as follows: John Queary - John Lemmond - William Lemmond - Marcus Lemmond - A. B. Lemmond - D. N. Lemmond - Mrs. Ira L. Black, who incidentally is also a descendant of another Signer—Adam Alexander, through his daughter, Catherine, whose granddaughter, Margaret, married John Queary's grandson, William Lemmond.

John Queary was a home-and-farm-man rather than a military leader or statesman; but when the opportunity to prove his patriotism presented itself in the May 19-20, 1775, convention he proved his loyalty to his adopted county when he placed his name on the Declaration without the least turn of the pen to disguise his distinctive signature.

John Queary was born in Scotland during the first half of the 18th century and migrated to America when just a young man. He first settled in Pennsylvania; later he moved to Mecklenburg and took up his abode in the Clear Creek section. One of his daughters, Elizabeth, married John Lemond, a Revolutionary War soldier.

From this union has come the major portion of John Queary's descendants, many of whom, however, have confused their ancestor with the Alexander Query clan—another prominent citizen of early Mecklenburg.

The latter's descendants do not claim any relationship with the "Signer." (Alexander and his wife sailed for America following their marriage in England about 1775. They settled in the Midland section of present-day Cabarrus county and should not in any manner be confused with John Queary who was of Scotch ancestry long settled in Ireland before emigrating to America.)

The site of John Queary's home has been under three different county governments: First, under the original county, Anson; Mecklenburg until 1842 and since that year Union county, but inasmuch as he did not file a will in either county it would appear he had no immediate relatives other than his own family; for upon his death he permitted them to share the estate in common.

While he may have accompanied Captain Alexander on his excursion against the Cherokee Indians in 1760, it is known he was a member of the company on its march to Raft Swamp against the Tories in that area. Several of his company patriots in the militia attained considerable

prominence during the Revolution—Capt. Charles Polk, son of the noted Thomas Polk; James Harris, who may have been a Declaration signer, since the exact identity of the signer of that name is not known.

Tradition has it John Queary was a scholar and student, especially proficient in mathematics and accumulated a moderate estate; he took no part in the political life of the county, although serving at times as juror, tax lister, census taker and a member of the militia.

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER XXI

Charles Alexander

By Alvah M. Stafford, M.D.

History has not recorded a well rounded life of Capt. Charles Alexander as some of the other signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, perhaps due to the shadows cast by his more noted brother, Adam, but it is recorded he was just as staunch a citizen of his adopted county as he was a patriot.

He was the son of Capt. William and Agnes Alexander and it is believed he was born between 1730-35 in Somerset county, Maryland.

Andrew Alexander, the paternal great-grandfather, and William, Sr., the maternal great-grandfather of the Charles, were members of the Scotch-Irish Presbyterian group that settled on the Eastern shore of Virginia and Maryland about, or soon after, 1670.

This was the first and original Scotch-Irish American settlement.

Where Charles is buried is not known. It is possible that he rests in the old Polk graveyard near Pineville, south of

Charlotte, where the tomb of his uncle, Ezra Alexander, was discovered in recent years.

In his will, Capt. Charles (This title was acquired during the Revolutionary War) named his wife Jean—probably Jane—and all efforts to determine her surname and lineage have failed. In no county record is there reference of her, although she survived her husband and was a legatee under his will.

It is not known when Charles migrated to Mecklenburg County. It may be that he arrived some time after his father, Capt. William Alexander, and his brother, Col. Adam. But we do know that his son, Charles, was born in Mecklenburg in 1775.

The first land record bearing his name is date May 16, 1765, and gave him title to land on Sugar Creek.

His father may have given him land from that granted William in 1751 or he may have been granted land by the Colonial Government before 1765 of which there are no records.

(Mecklenburg County was not constituted as a county until 1762.)

The home plantations of Capt. Charles were on both sides of Little Creek, extending from Big Sugar Creek on the west to McAlpin's Creek on the east, all in South Mecklenburg Eastward from Pineville in the general direction of Providence church. The land of his uncle, Ezra Alexander, also a signer, adjoined those of Charles on the south, while Ezekiel Polk was an intimate friend and neighbor.

Sparse Pennsylvania records would lead one to infer that Charles Alexander lived for a time in Cumberland County, Penna., before removing South. This would be but a short distance north of Frederick County, Md., where his father's family resided before going to Mecklenburg County, N. C.

Jean, the wife of Charles, may have been a Pennsylvanian.

Evidently Charles led an industrious, uneventful life, as no records are found that connect him with church or political activities, and yet he was evidently a man of integrity and substance; for he was frequently appointed by the Court as bondsman and appraiser of land.

(In the latter function, with William Alexander and Ezekial Polk, he appraised the lands of his deceased uncle, Ezra Alexander, as late as 1800).

Being a Captain of one of the militia companies, Charles Alexander was a delegate to the Mecklenburg Convention on May 19, 1775. May 20th, when the delegates approved and signed the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, and on May 31st, the Mecklenburg "Resolves" were adopted and signed.

(Col. Adam Alexander, brother of Capt. Charles, Abraham and Ezra Alexander, their uncles, also signed the Declaration and "Resolves," as well as John McKnitt and Hezekiah Alexander (brothers) their distant cousins).

(Six Alexander's, all blood kin, signed and participated in the enactment of this historic document).

Staunch patriots, Capt. Charles Alexander and his son, Capt. Charles, Jr., fought side by side in several battles in North and South Carolina during the Revolutionary War, although the military service of the son was more extended.

Under Cols. Thomas Polk and Adam Alexander, they took part in the "Snow Campaign" against the "Scovelites" late in 1775.

(This disorganized band—some what similar to the "Regulators" of North Carolina—were defeated in battle near Ninety-Six, S. C.).

About a year later the names of Charles, Sr., and Charles, Jr., appear as privates in the muster roll of Capt. Charles Polk's company of Light Horse, Col. Adam Alexander's regiment, Col. Griffith Rutherford commanding, in

the campaign against the Cherokee Indians, west of the Blue Ridge.

Capt. Charles, Sr. is next found as a lieutenant in Capt. Lewis' company of the Fourth North Carolina regiment under Col. Thomas Polk. He was commissioned Jan. 20, 1777, and was "omid" Jan. 1778. But later as a Captain he saw service in the Raft Swamp (Cumberland County, N. C.) campaign in the fall of 1781. He was then with Charles Polk's Dragoons.

Being soldiers of the Salisbury District, Capt. Charles and his son, Charles, were among those eligible for pensions—the subject of this sketch being designated as "Captain Charles Alexander."

Both father and son appear as militiamen of Mecklenburg County as late as 1785.

From the close of the Revolution to 1800 there are Court records as well as many land records concerning Charles Alexander, the Signer. In his later years he deeded much of his lands to his sons and some of these lands remained in the family for many years. With the exception of these records nothing more is known of him and his later days. He left no written word concerning his life or antecedents. In fact, the descendants of Charles appear to have ignored the importance of preserving family records and traditions, which makes the task of tracing this branch of the Mecklenburg Alexander's exceedingly difficult and unsatisfactory.

Should this article come to the notice of descendants of Charles Alexander, the compiler will appreciate any records or information in their possession.

The will of Capt. Charles Alexander, Sr., was made Jan. 28, 1801, and may be found in Mecklenburg Will Book A. It constituted his sons Charles, George and Abdon, his executors and the will was witnessed by Augustus and Paris Alexander, sons of his uncle Ezra. It mentions his wife

Jean (Jane) and gave his lands to her and the following named children:

Adam—the major legatee under his father's will, with the provision that he return and reside in Mecklenburg County. Apparently he had left his home county before his father made the will, but he returned after his father's death, as land records demonstrate that he was in Mecklenburg as late as 1815. He may have migrated to Tennessee, Georgia or Alabama about the time that western migration ran strong.

History records that one Capt. Adam S. Alexander of Lawrenceburg, Tenn., saw service during the Mexican War. It is written that he was a grandson of Charles Alexander, Sr. (He may have been a son of Adam.) The name of Adam's wife is unknown. Family records establish the names of their children as follows:

William Almarine—born 1801 and died in 1863. He married Nancy Ormond.

Elmira Matilda, who married Robert Fitzpatrick.

Mary A., born 1815 and died April 29, 1877.

Tirzah, born 1817 and died in 1877. Married William Reid in 1839.

Marcus Franklin, born 1821 and died in 1898, married Mary M. Johnston.

Capt. Charles, Jr., was born in Mecklenburg County, Jan. 4, 1755 and died in Maury County, Tenn., between June and November, 1834, where he is buried in Reece's Chapel cemetery.

Charles, Jr., was probably twice married, but the names of his wives are unknown. Charles remained on the land left to him by his father in the lower Sugar Creek section until 1814, when he settled in Giles (now Maury) County, Tenn. He was a Revolutionary soldier and served throughout the war with the Mecklenburg Militia. In 1834 Capt. Charles was a pensioner from Maury County, Tenn. One

of the signers of his pension application was James K. Polk, later President of the United States, who certified that he knew Charles for many years and that he was a respected man.

(Samuel Polk, father of James K., was a friend and near neighbor of the Charles Alexander's in Mecklenburg County, N. C.)

(The name of Capt. Charles Alexander, as a Revolutionary officer, appears on a bronze plaque in the Federal Building in Columbia, Tenn.)

The pension application of Capt. Charles gives a detailed account of his Revolutionary service and is not only very interesting but presents an over-all picture of the campaigns in which the Mecklenburg Militia participated.

Only two children of Charles, Jr., are known. There may have been others. They were John Marcus and Charles Taylor. The former was born near Huntersville, Mecklenburg County, in 1790-91. He died in Cabarrus County April 1, 1851. His first wife was Malinda, daughter of Col. Thomas McClure, the mother of all his children. He married second, Mrs. Catherine (Barringer) Rumble, of Rowan County. John M., removed to Cabarrus County about 1848. The following children were of Cabarrus County: Cyrus W.; Thomas McClure; Susan; Margaret Jr.; Charles J.; Catherine Caroline; John Marion, who was a Confederate officer and prominent man of Concord; Dorcas P.; Mary C., and Laura M.

The other son of Charles, Jr., Charles Taylor, removed from the Huntersville area after 1836 and efforts to trace him have been unsuccessful.

3. George inherited part of the land of Charles, the Signer, and bought more along McMichael's Creek. This was sold and he was living in Elbert County, Ga., in 1817.

4. Abdon also inherited a portion of his father's land, but it is probable that he migrated westward after 1806.

About 1815, there was an exodus of many North Carolinians into Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. Their descendants are many and difficult to identify. It would appear that many of the children and grandchildren of Capt. Charles and Ezra Alexander finally became residents of those states.

Ezra Alexander also had a son, Abdon, and it is difficult to separate the records of the two Abdons.

5. Margaret (Peggy). No records of this daughter are available.

6. Cassandra (Cassa) married James Huston. Their marriage bond being dated Jan. 1, 1803.

7. Jane may have married David Reid, for a marriage bond bearing these names is dated April 7, 1795.

Capt. Alexander passed away in Mecklenburg County, N. C., about 1802, as his last documentary signature on record is dated January 16, 1802, and the inventory of his estate was made in May, 1802.

Any one who can furnish further information concerning Capt. Charles will please communicate with this writer at 1734 Amherst Pl., Charlotte, N. C.

Every event in human history reflects an event in human experience.

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER XXII

William Kennon

Little as one might imagine, the educational attainments, the culture and high moral character of the 27 signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration, as a group, has never been excelled by any of America's various communal settlements.

Non-sectarian in every particular, the community had not been planned. All creeds were welcomed and while it chanced that most signers of this historical document were Presbyterians they accepted as their guest at the Declaration Convention a member of the Anglican church—William Kennon.

They also placed him on their resolution committee, along with Rev. Hezekiah James Balch and Dr. Ephraim Brevard. He was not even a citizen of the county. Born and reared in Virginia, he had upon his graduation as a lawyer a few years previously at the College of New Jersey (now called Princeton U.) settled in the newly established town of Salisbury, county seat of Mecklenburg's neighboring

county, Rowan—then the seat of the District court for this area.

The other signers were also comparative newcomers. Not one of them had been born in the county. All had come to Mecklenburg within the 25 years immediately preceding the Convention. It was accordingly sufficient for them, tolerant and democratic as they were in all things, that William Kennon was a patriot and that he favored separation from the Mother Country.

Why he happened to be in Charlotte on the day of the great Declaration Convention has long been an historic riddle. Court was not in session that day. He may have, of course, come to Charlotte on professional business. One might safely conjecture, on the other hand, that he had as head of the Safety Committee in Rowan county learned of the scheduled convention and traveled to Charlotte to post himself upon the attitude of the Mecklenburgians on the political status of the province.

History has recorded the fact the convention was not a chance affair.

The political affairs of the county and province had reached a stage when the local citizens decided to meet and discuss the situation. Thomas Polk, colonel of the local militia, had accordingly for several days been calling in the captains "and one other man" of the various militia companies to convene in Charlotte on May 19th and it has been chronicled Dr. Ephraim Brevard had gone so far as to prepare a set of resolutions he expected to read at the convention.

(When read before the convention it has been stated the resolutions were accepted as written.)

William Kennon's genealogical tree shows he was born and reared in Bristol parish in the county of Nottoway, Virginia. (The site of his father's plantation called "Oconochie," was about five miles south of present day Peters-

burg.) The year of William's birth was about 1735. His father, William Kennon, Sr. was a member of the House of Burgess, as the lower house of the provincial assembly was called.

The name of the Signer's mother is not known, except she is referred to in her husband's will as "Anne."

The progenitor of the Kennon family in Virginia had emigrated to America about the mid-1650's. His name is recorded as Richard Kennon. He had joined up with a group of associates and acquired a large amount of land along the eastern shore of Virginia.

The family prospered as the years passed. Most of them attained high places in the affairs of the parish and province.

The Signer's father was also named William and in later years to distinguish himself from his illustrious son the latter was called "William of Occonochie."

When William's genealogical history was written is not known, but at the time it was stated the Signer's aunt, Mary, born June 27, 1727, married John Bolling, son of Robert and Jane Rolfe Bolling.

(The latter was a granddaughter of the Indian Princess, Pocahontas, and through this family descended Edith Bolling Wilson, widow of former President Woodrow Wilson, and the Poythress family in Mecklenburg county.)

Richard Kennon had come over as a member of a syndicate which had obtained a grant of 2,827 acres of land in Henrico county—near Richmond, and indicative of their industry the Virginia Land Registry records show various members of the group soon acquired over 50,000 acres of land in that area.

William Kennon, the Signer, thus appears to have inherited a considerable landed estate. With it had come other property. He had been furnished an education suitable for his station in life and upon seeking a place to practice his

profession he selected the promising town in Western North Carolina—Salisbury.

He had apparently married before he arrived in Salisbury. The name of his wife is not known, except her surname has been recorded as "Willis"—through whose family Governor John Willis Ellis of North Carolina, 1859-61, descended.

William Kennon had four children: William, Jr., who died unmarried, and three daughters. The youngest married Lewis Burrell. Their daughter in turn became the wife of Wm. M. McCarty, a member of Congress and later acting governor of Florida. The other daughters also married into prominent families and the Signer's uncles and their descendants attained high places in the affairs of Virginia and other states.

(This writer has a complete genealogical history of the Kennon family, but space will not permit its publication here.)

The name of William Kennon in North Carolina appears several times in the Collected Colonial Records; also one Richard Kennon of Granville county and one William Kennon who was clerk of the court in Chatham county, but their kinship with the "Signer" cannot be determined.

The Colonial Records list the "Signer" as a member of the militia which with his known Revolutionary War record and his connection with the Rowan Safety Committee offers ample proof of his zeal as a patriot.

He was instrumental in the organization of the Committee of Safety at Salisbury in April, 1774, and was elected chairman.

In August of that year he was elected as a delegate to represent Salisbury in the state-wide conference held at New Bern to discuss the political status of the entire colony and was appointed chairman of the meeting—the first

such assembly of the citizens of the providence without royal permission.

History records it as the "People's Congress."

When the Revolution finally broke, William Kennon, then 40 or more years of age—was commissioned a colonel and appointed head of the commissary department—an arduous task it was, providing vituals for the soldiers of the province—often onerous, and when unable to fully meet the demands of the post and one criticism followed another without a knowledge of the problems he faced Col. Kennon resigned in 1778 and returned to Salisbury.

Zealous patriot that he was, his public life here nevertheless was brought to a close soon after this untoward event; other misfortunes struck him at this time. His family were all but destroyed by the British invasion and as a result of his action in the famous Dunn-Boote disloyalty matter at Salisbury in 1775 many of his Salisbury friends turned against him.

(Dunn and Boote had been "Crown" attorneys in Salisbury and when the Signer discovered they had signed a royal loyalty pledge he reported them to the "Court of Inquiry" in Charlotte; a group of Mecklenburgians traveled to Salisbury, arrested both men and brought them to Charlotte, presumably for a trial.

What ever the proceedings may have been, the two men were next carried under guard to Charleston, S. C., and placed in prison. Both were finally released and upon their return to Salisbury in 1778 many of their friends believed they had been misjudged and history records the probability that it was because of this affair William Kennon left Salisbury.

Where he went history does not record, but within recent years it was discovered through one of his descendants who visited Salisbury that he moved to Georgia.

This incident is related by Rev. Jethro Rumble in his "History of Old Salisbury;" yet, if he knew, he does not state where the Signer settled. Georgia was then less settled than Mecklenburg. All efforts to obtain a record of him through the historical societies of Georgia have failed, but soon this writer hopes to clear up this phase of this Signer's life.

William Kennon's name appears but a few times in the minutes of the records of the pre-Revolutionary War courts in Rowan county; it is known, though, he practiced in other counties.

His brother-in-law—Willis, is said to have participated in the Dunn-Boote affair, but no other record of him can be found.

While William Kennon's career in North Carolina came to an end about 1778, that he stood high in the affairs of Revolutionary War in North Carolina is indicated by the statement of Wm. L. Saunders one of the Colonial Collected Record compilers, that he should have been one of the delegates to the Continental Congress at Philadelphia in 1776; he was able, a patriot and a fluent speaker, but Dr. Saunders stated the majority vote in the convention was under the control of the more populated eastern counties.

Thus it was a delegate was not selected from the western counties of the State.

When he represented Rowan county in the first provincial Congress he served on several committees and was appointed to confer with all new settlers in this area and acquaint them with the abuses of the Crown and to urge them to join up with the citizens in their unwillingness to submit to the imposition of the King's officers.

William Kennon also signed the resolution adopted by the Congress protesting against the removal to England for trial all patriots who resisted the King's officers.

This petition incidentally was signed for Mecklenburg by Benjamin Patton.

The petition provided that unless the Crown desisted from its intention to send all such patriots to England for trial the various counties of the provinces agreed to refuse to accept imports from Great Britain and also would discontinue exporting commodities from this province to Great Britain.

This provincial congress was also presented a petition signed by a number of citizens of Salisbury, friends of Dunn and Boote, requesting the Congress refuse to seat the delegate from Rowan—Wm. Kennon, whose name incidentally was not mentioned, but the Congress after certain inquiry stated the petition was without merit; that the facts showed both Dunn and Boote were disloyal and declined to give the redress requested.

Our efforts to solve the 175-years riddle of William Kennon's removal from Salisbury or possibly locate some members of his family in Wilkes County, Ga., failed completely; then, impressed with the possibility Wilkes county may have had other counties sliced off as had happened to Mecklenburg, we were finally informed by the clerk of the court in Lincoln county that the "Signer" died there in 1805; that he died intestate, but his estate was administered there and all property sold at public auction. No heirs were mentioned.

Thus it was William Kennon's line came to an end, although he had three daughters, but of them, however, no record can be found.

William Kennon was no doubt a great and good man, some what impetuous, patriotically, perhaps, but had he remained in North Carolina he would have surely become one of the most noted men of the entire state.

Efforts are now under way to ascertain his place of burial in Georgia.

REFERENCES:

Because this Signer moved to Georgia in 1778 the local records contain very little information of him after this date, but the North Carolina Collected Colonial records furnished the writer with the major portion of the facts in this sketch relative to his public life; also a brief sketch of him by Lyman Draper, Dr. J. B. Alexander, Foote's sketches, and the court records in Salisbury; his genealogy was obtained from the Kennon Family Tree furnished the author by the Virginia Historical Commission, Richmond, Va.

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER XXIII

John Phifer

Honored father—honored son! Such was the fortune of John Phifer—signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence.

He was the son of Martin Phifer—a Swiss emigre who in the late 1730's emigrated to America and some 15 years later settled upon a tract of land beside a small stream in Anson county—later a part of Mecklenburg, but today it lay within the bounds of Cabarrus county.

He called the stream “Cold Water Creek” and also named his plantation home “Cold Water.”

The life history of John Phifer is for the most part the life history of his illustrious father who according to family tradition was born in Berne, Switzerland. The date was October 18, 1720. He was not quite 17 years of age when he sailed for America. The circumstances surrounding this bold, peril-laden venture are not known. But what ever may have been the impetus, he nevertheless landed at Philadelphia ten months later.

He was apparently accompanied by his younger brother—also called John; for, some years later, we find them together in Virginia. The locations of their home there has not been recorded. Martin nevertheless had a grant of land. He must to have married there. The lady he chose for his life's companion was Margaret Blackwelder. She was the daughter of Caleb Blackwelder—a native of Holland, and had apparently come over to America on the same ship with him. The year of their marriage was 1745.

John, the "Signer," born March 25, 1747, was their first child, followed by Caleb Phifer on April 8, 1749, and Martin, Jr., March 25, 1756.

Charles N. Phifer of Concord, N. C., wrote a brief biography of John, the "Signer," in 1888 and stated Martin, Sr., and his wife reached Mecklenburg area about 1755; hence, Martin, Jr., was born after their arrival in Mecklenburg.

(This biography was not published until 1910 when the late G. E. Wilson, father of Charlotte's present postmaster, and a descendant of John Phifer, discovered the manuscript and published it in book form; it also includes the genealogical history of the Phifer family from Martin, Sr., down to the 20th century.)

Martin, Sr.'s younger brother, John, settled in Rowan county, but of him we have no other record.

Martin, Sr., early acquired considerable land along Cold Water creek; also Buffalo creek, established a mill and acquired considerable wealth and political influence; for he was soon elected to represent Anson county in the Provincial Legislature.

He was of the Lutheran faith, and spelled his name "Pifer," according to the signature on his original will on file in the Charlotte courthouse, although it was spelled "Pfifer" by his son, John, the "Signer."

Through a misinterpretation of their signatures, however, when their wills were probated, the name was spelled "Phifer" after the English manner.

The "f" was hooked up with the "P" as if to form an "h"—so the name is spelled "Phifer" today!

History does not record any data upon the life of Margaret Phifer, although it is known the Blackwelder family has been one of the most prominent in this area these 200 years. One of her descendants wrote of her: ". . . she was a lady of exemplary character and intelligence"—a circumstance confirmed by the high character and mental acumen of her three off-springs, all of whom attained high prominence in the civil, political and military life of their county and state.

The sons of this splendid couple also added materially to the fortunes willed to them by their illustrious father.

Martin Phifer, Sr., was a member of the Provincial Assembly when in 1762 the Mecklenburgians decided they wished to be established as a separate and distinct county. A delegation of prominent citizens called upon him. When they explained the needs for a new county, he approved their proposal and promptly filed a bill for that purpose in the Legislature and after its third required reading before that august body Mecklenburg was formed as a new county. The date was November 30, 1762.

The boundary laid down between Mecklenburg and Anson county brought the home and plantations of Martin Phifer, Sr., within the limits of Mecklenburg.

John Phifer, the Signer, was furnished with the best education obtainable in a frontier country. He started his public career early, first entering the local militia. As a member of that organization he was summonsed to attend the convention in Charlotte on May 19-20, 1775, when the Declaration was adopted. The convention had been called

by the Safety Committee to consider the evils inflicted upon the people by their tyrannical governor.

Due to the uprising in North Carolina, Governor Martin had sailed for New York City from whence when the War of Independence got under full sway he left for England and as if in support of his tyrannical rule in North Carolina he was appointed to a high position in the military service.

Just what part John Phifer played in the deliberations of the Declaration convention is not known, except he signed that historic document. He is said to have been an accomplished speaker and no doubt expressed his belief in human freedom; for throughout his subsequent career he was an ardent patriot and served his county and state courageously in war as well as politically. Mecklenburg called upon him several times to attend the state convention. He was first appointed major in the local militia.

On August 21, 1775, he was a delegate to the "Peoples' Congress" or convention to consider the status of affairs in the State. The Congress was held at Hillsboro—one of the first ever convened without royal approval.

The records of this Congress, as noted in the Collected Colonial records of North Carolina, show he was an active member of that body and one of the first to sign the loyalty oath and also that he served on several committees with his other local compatriots.

Because Governor Martin had abandoned his post and sought shelter aboard an English ship in New Bern harbor, the State was without any form of government; the citizens thereupon decided to call another Congress and form an independent, representative form of government. The Congress was held at Halifax on April 4, 1776 and again John Phifer was one of Mecklenburg's representatives. Failure to adopt a constitution, another convention was required. This session was also held at Halifax on November 12, 1776. Certain of the loyalty of the signers of

the Mecklenburg Declaration, John Phifer was once more summonsed to the aid of his country. Mecklenburg had been governed by the Resolves of May 31, 1775; yet the State was without an organized government and it was at this convention the State's first constitution was adopted.

John Phifer, the youthful son of Martin Phifer, Sr., was one of the leaders in all of these movements and following the outbreak of the Revolution he was on December 21, 1776, appointed a Lieutenant-Colonel and placed in command of one of the ten battalions organized by the Council of War for the Salisbury Militia District in which Mecklenburg was located.

The noted General Griffith Rutherford was the commanding general.

Their first special duty was an expedition against the marauding Cherokee Indians back in the mountains and at Old Fort—headquarters of the Tories in Western North Carolina.

Soon after this expedition the western district of South Carolina fell under the grip of the Tories of that section. John Phifer once more joined in with the Mecklenburgians headed by Col. Thomas Polk and marched against the Tories at the uniquely named village of "Ninety-Six."

Called "Scovelites," the Tories were put to flight after a short fight and Western South Carolina was cleared of the enemies of the independence movement.

This expedition was the last military service John Phifer was able to render his country. He contracted a disease while on the march which abruptly ended his life early in 1778, less than three years after he perpetuated his memory in Mecklenburg by placing his signature upon the Mecklenburg Declaration.

He was only 31 years of age—probably the youngest signer of that historic document, when he was carried away by the Grim Reaper.

John had early in life established himself as a prosperous planter and owner of considerable land along the creeks where his father had settled, including two State grants he obtained after the State was organized.

He had in 1768 married Catherine Barringer—daughter of another distinguished Mecklenburger, Paul Barringer, and established her in his own home, called “Red Hill,” which stood on an eminence overlooking his own broad acres along Buffalo Creek.

Paul Barringer was the great, great grandfather of Mecklenburg’s noted octogenarian—Osmond Barringer of Charlotte.

The first of his family to pass away, John Phifer was buried on his farm in a plot known today as the “Phifer graveyard” three miles south of Concord.

Due to his lingering illness, he had opportunity to write his own will and by it he devised a considerable fortune to his wife, Catherine, and his two young children, particularly specifying that Paul be given a liberal education and that “Red Hill” be held by Catherine as long as she remained a widow, together with other property not willed his children.¹

Catherine remained at “Red Hill” ten years. She then married George Savietz, Jr., member of a prosperous and prominent family in Rowan county. Soon thereafter she moved to her husband’s home in Rowan. Her children, however, remained at “Red Hill” which was located on the stage road and conducted several years as a public house by various members of the Phifer family.

¹On May 20, 1839, this Signer’s grandson, Daniel Monroe Barringer, lawyer, Minister to Spain, judge, member of Congress where he was desk mate of Abraham Lincoln, was the main speaker at a Mecklenburg Declaration all-day celebration held at Concord in honor of the Signers who lived in Cabarrus county. The event was given full-page coverage by the *Western Carolinian*, a newspaper of Salisbury, which gave full text of the main speech of 3,500 words, a copy of which is now a prized possession of Charlotte’s own Osmond Barringer, a 5th generation descendant of this Signer.

Catherine Phifer Savietz survived until May 26, 1823, and was laid away with her husband and several children in the Savietz family cemetery near China Grove, N. C.

Martin Phifer, Sr., and his two sons, Caleb and Martin, Jr., lived for several years following John's death and while his early death had severed their relationship John, the Signer, is generally considered the foremost member of this illustrious family.

Martin, Jr., attained considerable prominence during the Revolution, serving for the most part as liaison officer between General Washington's headquarters and the North Carolina war chiefs—a hazardous assignment, indeed.

When President Washington made his tour of the southern tier of States in 1791 he wrote in his diary: "I left Charlotte about 7 o'clock Sunday morning . . . and lodged that night at Major (Martin, Jr.) Phifer's."

The Major was then head of "Red Hill," later called "Long's Tavern," having taken possession of it upon Catherine's marriage and as guardian of her children.

John Phifer's father also once had a very important guest, according to family tradition: In 1768 when the royal governor, William Tryon, visited Mecklenburg and other parts of Western North Carolina he wrote in his journal of the tour that with his retinue of attendants and six-horse carriage he lodged one night with Martin Phifer, Sr., in his palatial home; that he was received with gracious hospitality and while there was invited to attend church services conducted by Rev. Samuel Suther—prominent Lutheran minister in Western North Carolina.

(Martin Phifer was not a Tory in any manner, although during the earlier years he had been an ardent subject of the Crown; but when the famous stamp act was forced upon the Americans he was one of the first to denounce it and when the Revolution finally broke he joined up with

his sons and did all he could at his age to free his adopted country of the enemy.

Earlier chroniclers of Mecklenburg county have stated John Phifer, the "Signer," once resided in Rowan county. This is an error. He owned considerable land in Rowan, as indicated by his will, but he never moved away from "Cold Water" plantation, except for the latter two years of his short life which were spent at "Red Hill." His widow, however, married a Rowan county citizen and lived in Rowan county until her death in 1823, but her children elected to stay on at "Red Hill" after she married at which time they came under the guardianship of their uncle, Martin Phifer, Jr.²

The memory of John Phifer, together with his father, brothers, and a large number of descendants of himself and near relatives, has been perpetuated by a tall granite shaft in Oakwood cemetery, Concord, N. C.

The funds for this imposing memorial were contributed by Robert Fullenwilder Phifer, of Chicago—fifth in line from Martin Phifer, Sr. This shaft or cenotaph stands amid a circular grassy plot on a commanding eminence in the cemetery; it is constructed of a whitish granite, patterned after the monoliths or obelisks of ancient Egypt, with the Phifer coat-of-arms carved on each of its four sides, and with its superbly carved Roman-type base proclaims to the world the worth, honor and glory of the extensive family Martin and Margaret Phifer bequeathed to North Carolina.

The monument was designed by Tiffany, New York.

REFERENCES

The data for this sketch was obtained for the most part from the sketch by Charles N. Phifer, as published by George E. Wilson, Sr., in 1910 and in part from a sketch in the Charlotte Observer of January, 1934, by Janie A. Patterson, all descendants of the Signer; both sources were loaned the writer by another descendant, Mrs. Willis C. Strange, Mobile, Ala., but the public life of John Phifer and his father was obtained from the Collected Colonial Records of North Carolina, their wills and land deeds.



Ruins Maj. John Davidson Mansion still standing.



Burial place John Davidson.

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER XXIV

Maj. John Davidson

Maj. John Davidson—pioneer, military leader, farmer, iron mine owner—signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence of May 19-20, 1775, started life as a blacksmith, an ancient and honorable trade, 'tis true, but when he passed away on January 10, 1832, age 97 years he had long been one of the wealthiest citizens of western North Carolina.

His estate extended several miles north and south along the east bank of the Catawba river in northwest Mecklenburg county and much of it today, including the site of Rural Hill, the original plantation home, is now owned by one of his 5th generation descendants, the Joe G. Davidson family who are also descendants of another Declaration signer—Richard Barry.

Known more generally in history as “Major” John Davidson because of his activities as a staff officer of the militia and in the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War, he was appointed a brigadier-general of the organization at the close of the war.

John Davidson was born amidst the wilds of western Pennsylvania. The year was 1735. His parents—Robert and Isabella Ramsey Davidson—had come over from Ulster, Ireland, where their parents had settled some years previously following their removal from their original home in Scotland. Other chroniclers believed the Davidsons emigrated to America direct from Dundee, Scotland.

The Davidsons were for several centuries a prominent clan in the Highlands of Scotland; yet history records but little data upon the life or family history of John Davidson's immediate antecedents.

Family tradition indicate however they descended from substantial, well educated forebears and that John Davidson possessed the traits and presence of a well-bred aristocrat.

Robert Davidson's trade or occupation in Pennsylvania is not known. He however died soon after his marriage to the youthful Isabella Ramsey. John was their first child. He also had a sister, Mary. What ever may have been the reason, the widowed Isabella and her two children later emigrated to North Carolina about 1745-50. The exact year is not known. Some early Mecklenburg chroniclers thought the Signer's father, Robert Davidson, possibly was a cousin if not a brother of the noted Revolutionary War general, William Lee Davidson, and that Isabella and her children accompanied him to North Carolina. Other historians state their relationship, if any, was quite remote and that the young widow moved to North Carolina at the suggestion of the John Brevards—later one of Rowan county's most prominent families.

They had settled some few years earlier in the wilds of Iredell county—then a part of Anson county (formed 1748) and in 1753 was organized as Rowan county.

Whether or not Isabella was a relative of the Brevards is not known. She may have known them in Maryland.

Where Isabella first took up her place of abode in this area has never been disclosed, except it was not near the Brewards, but rather near the Yadkin river in Rowan county. Soon after she had domiciled herself here she entered John and Mary in a nearby school conducted by one Henry Henry or Hendry. A short time later the school teacher became the step-father of John and Mary. History records but little concerning him. It has been stated nevertheless several children were born of this union, but of them very little is known.

John's mother lived a long life and was laid away in the old Baker's graveyard in present-day Iredell county.

When John was still a mere lad he was sent out to learn the trade of a blacksmith—then, of course, a very important one in a pioneer country. The name of his trade instructor has been lost. It was stated, nevertheless, he was a friend of the Davidsons in Pennsylvania and had settled in the present-day Midland section of Cabarrus county—then a part of Mecklenburg. Because of his age—possibly 15 or 20 years when his mother moved to North Carolina—it may be possible he learned the blacksmith trade in Pennsylvania.

When John had learned his trade he returned to his mother's home, but a number of other children had to be fed and clothed. Inspired by his self-reliant, independent spirit, which characterized his entire life, John decided about 1760 to establish himself in the world. He is said to have decided to emigrate to present-day Lincoln county west of the Catawba river. He took his sister, Mary, with him as his housekeeper. When they reached the Catawba river, they discovered it was so swollen from recent rains a crossing was impossible. John Davidson thereupon decided to settle on the east bank of the river and eventually acquired, according to several estimates rather than a survey, up to 20,000 acres in that area—an exaggregation perhaps based

no doubt upon a vista of the eye as one stood upon the hill which John had selected for his brick mansion house—a prominence from which the tree tops in three counties can be observed.

The 2-room cabin he first erected eventually evolved as an 8-room house which early Mecklenburg historians recorded was replaced in 1788 by a red-brick manor house with a wide porch supported by four large columns and that the year “1788” was scratched on one of the window panes. This old home stood as a Mecklenburg show place until it was destroyed by fire in the year 1886.

(The columns, oddly enough, are still standing as straight and solid as when first erected as an addition some years after the main building was constructed.

Some of the land acquired by John Davidson lay along the lands of the noted Samuel Wilson—long one of Mecklenburg’s most prominent citizens.

Large families, daughters as well as boys, was then the rule in Mecklenburg.

Violet Wilson was one of Samuel’s numerous beautiful daughters. John finally won her hand and heart over the courtship of several other swains. They were married June 2, 1761, and from this union came the following children:

Rebecca, born March 20, 1762, married Capt. Alexander Brevard.

Isabella, born September 21, 1764, married the noted Gen. Joseph Graham.

Mary, born December 13, 1766, married Dr. Wm. McLean.

Robert, born April 7, 1769, married Margaret Osborne.

Violet, born Aug. 27, 1771, married Wm. Bain Alexander.

Sarah, born June 13, 1774, married Rev. Alexander Caldwell.

Margaret, born Feb. 8, 1777, married James Harris.
 John, Jr., born Nov. 12, 1779, married Sarah Harper Brevard.

Elizabeth, born Sept. 15, 1782, married Wm. Lee Davidson—son of Gen. Wm. Lee Davidson.

Benjamin, born May 20, 1787, married Elizabeth Latta.

Because Benjamin was born on the anniversary date of the signing of the Mecklenburg Declaration tradition has it his father often referred to him as "Independence Ben."

Through this long list of children and their highly successful marriages Maj. John Davidson became the progenitor of many distinguished families of today, not only in Mecklenburg county but throughout the nation.

Excluding the city lots he purchased in Charlotte his recorded land holdings totaled approximately 3,000 acres, but it can be safely presumed he owned other lands and through his wife inherited part of the Samuel Wilson estate.

The extent of the Davidson estate cannot be even remotely estimated by the Signer's will which was dated September 23, 1831—less than one year prior to his death; he specifically stated he had provided each of his children with certain allowances, perhaps upon their marriage; all had contracted approved marriages and several daughters passed away before his demise, but he made special provision for their children and heirs, as well as several nephews.

He then directed his executors to appraise his property and to offer it for sale and what ever income was received one-seventh each was to be distributed among his surviving children.

His will quite clearly indicates the close companiopship he had with his children and that he had made substantial improvements on his lands, such as a canal which had changed the main channel of the creek and that he owned a large number of slaves and livestock.

John Davidson's biographers have stated he established the first iron mine in this area; it was located across the Catawba river in Lincoln county, called Vesuvius Furnace and that he operated the Tirzah forge where during the War of 1812 with England cannon balls were made for the American army.

(The foundation of these plants can still be observed.)

His sons-in-law Gen. Joseph Graham and Capt. Alexander Brevard were associated with him in this venture and perhaps because of his age the Signer provided the financial support and the more direct supervision of the works were in the hands of his younger associates, but it is stated he forged an axe for himself and that this relic of his youthful trade is still in the possession of one of his descendants.

The rich products of the John Davidson plantation is said to have been the objective of a force of 500 or more foraging Tories and British soldiers who when they attempted (2-1-1781) to cross the Catawba from the west bank to the east bank at Cowan's Ford were ambushed by a small group of Americans and forced to alter their course through fear of another ambush.

Scouts had informed the Americans of the approach of the British and Gen. Wm. Lee Davidson was placed in command of the resisting force.

He is said to have made his headquarters at John Davidson's nearby home and that when the attack was made the General was riding one of his host's horses.

While the Americans halted the British, they lost their General who was felled by a Tory's bullet and upon falling from his horse the riderless animal carried the sad news to the Davidson home.

(General Davidson—born 1746—was a son of George Davidson of Rowan county and it is generally believed the latter was a brother of Robert Davidson, the Signer's father, who died early in life in Pennsylvania.)

John Davidson's public life was for the most part confined to the Revolutionary War period. We first find mention of his name in local politics when he was selected as the Crown's magistrate in upper Mecklenburg; then, in 1772, he was appointed the Crown's representative from Mecklenburg in the Provincial Assembly at New Bern where Governor Tryon had established the provincial capital.

(Associated with him was the noted Martin Phifer, Jr., whose father was Martin Phifer, Sr., representative in the General Assembly from Anson county (1762) who introduced the bill in the Legislature whereby Mecklenburg was established as a separate and distinct county.)

While in the General Assembly he proposed a law still in effect today—the rule that when a plaintiff fails to prove his case the costs of the suit should be borne by himself; he also proposed a public road to the Atlantic ocean and that a more suitable courthouse be erected in Charlotte.

John Davidson was not an ardent religionist. He was nevertheless reared in the Presbyterian faith; hence, it was but natural that nearby Hopewell should become the home church of himself and his large family. The rolls of the church, however, do not indicate the extent to which he participated in the organization of this now historic church. He is not listed among the elders or deacons. There is not much doubt, though, but that he attended services there and supported the church in a financial manner.

Traditionally, if not an actual occurrence, a most unique anecdote occurred relative to this Signer's interest in the church. He fully honored our day of worship—Sunday. However, evangelical or rather all-week protracted meetings did not appeal to his understanding of man's moral nature. Man, he thought, should naturally be moral and dutifully honor his God and not to require emotional agitation by overly zealous exhorters to bestir his piety.

Firm in his resolves, particularly in his latter years, he refused to recognize the evangelists and finally withdrew from Hopewell. He then associated himself with the Psalm singing ARP Presbyterians newly established (1789) Associate Reformed Presbyterian church—Gilead, about four miles west of Hopewell and remained with this congregation until his death.

The inference was drawn he believed the revivals interfered with the farm work and that the farm people neglected their labors to drive or ride horseback 10 or more miles to attend the services or possibly camp on the church grounds the entire week.

Prudent and possessed of unusual foresight, John Davidson early after his marriage selected across the highway from his home a beautifully situated plot as "God's Acre" for the deceased members of his family; this cemetery, walled in a few years ago with an old field stones by his equally affable descendant—Col. E. Baxter Davidson, stands today as a magnificent memorial to the youthful pioneer who conquered a wilderness and made himself one of the most honored men of his adopted county.

This picturesque walled-in plot today contains not only the mortal remains of the founder of the Davidson clan in Mecklenburg, but many of his illustrious descendants.

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER XXV

Col. Adam Alexander

By Dr. Alvah Stafford

Col. Adam Alexander was a man of many interests, planter, merchant, miller, jurist, but particularly known by his countrymen and later generations as a military leader, a fighting man.

This characteristic was doubtless inherited from his Scot-Irish ancestors and the training obtained on the Maryland and Pennsylvania frontier during his young manhood when Indian outbreaks were frequent and often tragic.

Adam's father bore the title of "Captain" and many of his close kinsmen were quite capable of teaching the young man the essence of primitive warfare. Few troops marched out of Mecklenburg, before or during the Revolutionary War, that did not include Adam as an officer and few major campaigns were fought in the Carolinas without him.

Col. Adam was a soldier's soldier, beloved and trusted by his men because he never asked them to do that which he would not do. An example of this occurred during the

"Regulator" insurrection in May, 1771. Gov. Tryon ordered the militia to assemble and directed Gen. Hugh Waddell to collect forces from the western counties, rendezvous at Salisbury and join him in Guilford County. Waddell crossed the Yadkin, but was warned by the "Regulators" to retreat. Meanwhile Capt. Adam Alexander voluntarily reconnoitered the "Regulators," reporting that he had passed along their lines and found them in strong force and position. Meanwhile he had the courage, together with other officers (Griffith Rutherford and Robert Harris) to send Gov. Tryon a letter advising him of the superiority of the insurgents in number and that a great part of Waddell's men would not fight. Waddell, with his small force of 250 men retreated to Salisbury; meanwhile the "Regulators" had been defeated at the Battle of Alamance.

The following record proves that Adam was a Mecklenburg militia officer several years before: "Clear Creek. June ye 7th., A. D. 1776. Militia Return. A Company commanded by Capt. Adam Alexander, Esq'r. Officers, Lieut. Charles Polk. Ensign, James Harris."

Henceforth he remained a militia officer until the end of the Revolutionary War.

Col. Adam Alexander, the son of Capt. William and Agnes (Alexander) Alexander, was born near Princess Anne, Somerset County, Maryland, Sept. 23, 1728, and died in Mecklenburg County, N. C., Nov. 13, 1798.

Adam married Aug. 4, 1752, Mary Shelby, of Frederick County, Md., who was born Aug. 8, 1735, and died in Mecklenburg County, N. C., Nov. 28, 1813.

He was of the fourth generation, descended from two of the Alexander families that formed part of the first distinctively Scotch-Irish settlement on the Eastern Shore of Maryland with Somerset County as its center.

Andrew, William, Samuel, James, John and Francis Alexander are known to have been on the "Eastern Shore"

from 1667 to 1712. All were from Ulster, North Ireland, of pure Scotch-Irish Presbyterian blood, and if not brothers there was undoubtedly close kinship. Many of the Alexanders of Mecklenburg County, as well as inter-married families, were descended from these pioneers.

Andrew was Adam's paternal great-grandfather and William, Sr., his maternal great-grandfather.

Elias, his paternal grandfather, was born in Somerset County, Md., Feb. 26, 1679, and died in Frederick County, Md., in 1747-48.

Elias's first wife was Sophie, daughter of Joseph Alexander, the tanner, who was one of the original settlers of New Munster, Cecil County, Md. (Joseph's son, James, was the father of John McKnitt and Hezekiah, both signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration and both Revolutionary patriots and army officers).

The last wife of Elias Alexander was Ann Taylor, who was the mother of his younger children and migrated to North Carolina with them. He had eight sons and two daughters. William, Abraham, Ezra, Arthur and Elias, Jr., as well as a daughter who married John Flenniken, father of a signer, settled in Mecklenburg County.

William, the eldest, married Agnes (his cousin), daughter of William Alexander, Jr., of Somerset County, Md., and they were the parents of this Signer and Capt. Charles Alexander.

William, Jr., was a prominent citizen and large land owner on the Eastern Shore.

William, father of Adam, lived in western Maryland with his family and on Oct. 5, 1751, petitioned the Colonial Council, sitting in New Bern, N. C., for 500 acres of land in Anson County and his petition was granted.

(Anson County then included all of the western portion of the State, but Rowan was set apart in 1753 and Mecklenburg in 1762).

William and his family evidently removed to North Carolina soon thereafter, for on Feb. 24, 1756, he is recorded as the Captain of an early militia company.

Some of the "older men" in his company were: Moses Shelby, Aaron, Andrew and Moses Alexander).

Many land records are found of Capt. William (Adam's father) in which he is described as William Alexander, Merchant, of Anson County" and "William Alexander, Merchant, in ye County of Rowan"—apparently a very prosperous man.

Col. Adam and Capt. Charles are the only known children of William and Agnes (Alexander) Alexander; both signed the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence and were officers during the Revolutionary War.

The will of William Alexander was dated March 22, 1772. He directed that his wife, Agnes, "have all that she brought with her" and appointed his son, Adam, executor of his estate.

Abraham, brother of William, migrated to Mecklenburg County about the same time as his kinsmen and became an outstanding citizen, magistrate, commissioner of Charlotte, chairman of the Committee of Public Safety, Revolutionary officer, educator, elder in Sugar Creek Presbyterian Church and, as an ardent patriot, acted as chairman of the Mecklenburg convention in May, 1775.

Ezra Alexander, another brother of Abraham, became a large landowner in Mecklenburg and was also a signer of the Declaration and as a militia captain saw active service against the Tories in several engagements during the Revolutionary War.

Col. Elias, youngest son of Elias Alexander, Sr., settled in Mecklenburg County with his mother. Both later obtained land grants. Later on he removed to the present Rutherford County, where he became prominent. He was

a Colonel at the Battle of King's Mountain and Guilford Court House.

Had Elias Alexander, of Maryland, lived throughout the Revolutionary period, he may well have been proud of the part played by his direct descendants in North Carolina. Two of his sons and two grandsons signed the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence and "Resolves." Three sons held officers commissions, as well as three grandsons, and at least three great-grandsons bore arms against the British. All served in the Mecklenburg militia or Continental Line.

Truly a distinguished American family!

The exact date of Adam Alexander's arrival in Mecklenburg County, is not known, but it was doubtless soon after he married Mary Shelby at the home of her brother, Gen. Evan Shelby, in western Maryland in 1752. His father had been granted land in 1751, and it is probable that a number of the family emigrated to North Carolina in 1752-53, for the southern exodus was just beginning and caravans were making their way southward in ever increasing numbers. These were generally made up of kinsmen, friends and neighbors—all having a common urge and objective. Down the Cumberland Valley and up the Shenandoah; following the Staunton River through the Blue Ridge; south to the River Dan, almost to Salem and then on to the present Mecklenburg area. A long, difficult and dangerous trek—covered wagons and carts carrying women and children, provisions, simple household furniture and utensils and farming tools. Livestock trailing along behind, herded by armed men, mounted and on foot.

The Scot-Irish were ever a migratory race, carrying with them their love of freedom and staunch religious code.

Where Adam first settled is not known, but it was certainly in the Rocky River-Clear Creek section. No records of land grants by the Colonial Council have been found; he

may have been given land by his father. At any event we know that he was settled there in 1755, for the diary of Rev. Hugh McAden who made a missionary trip through the Carolina's at that time states that he preached at "Justice (Adam) Alexander's, on Rock River" on Sunday, Oct. 12, 1775.

Adam again appears as a prominent citizen as early as 1756, for he, Col. Harris and Capt. Barry were delegated to confer with the Catawba Indians, and in May they appeared before Chief Justice Henly at Salisbury where King Hagler of the Catawba Nation presented his grievances against the whites and his enemies, the Cherokees.

The first recorded land grant in Mecklenburg County of Adam Alexander concerned several hundred acres of land granted him in 1764-65 by Gov. Dobbs. This he sold in 1767 and it was about this time that he bought land in Clear Creek from his brother-in-law, Moses Shelby who had been granted the land in 1755.

The oldest deed in possession of Col. Adam's descendants was made by Gov. Arthur Dobbs to Moses Shelby in that year. This was the place where Moses built his brick mansion, which was sold after Adam's death to the Rev. John McKemmie Wilson. It stood on the hillside overlooking the valley, while the frame house built later by his son, Charles Taylor Alexander, stood near the public road.

Col. Adam's home and land lay in what is now known as Clear Creek Township and comprised 1,880 acres at the time it came into the possession of his son, Charles Taylor. It had originally been much larger, various tracts having been sold or given to his sons. It was intersected by the old Charlotte-Fayetteville Road and Clear Creek. Graham's map of 1789, locates the home of Adam north of the highway, while his store and mill were situated to the west.

Despite the demands put upon him by his large plantations, store, mill and county offices, Adam Alexander, never ceased to assume leadership in military affairs.

The roster of the militia company in the Clear Creek section, dated June 7, 1766, shows that it was commanded by him as Captain, with Charles Polk as Ensign. So when the "Scovelites" had defeated the South Carolina forces at Ninety-Six, S. C., he went with Col. Polk and 300 militiamen to aid Maj. Williamson and in Dec. 1775 defeated the lawless "Scovelites."

(This was known as the "Snow Campaign" on account of the unusual fall of snow at that time.)

While absent upon this expedition the Provincial Congress, Dec. 18, 1775, appointed Thomas Polk Colonel. Adam Alexander was appointed Lieutenant-Colonel, with Charles McLean as Major.

For many years there had been increasing resentment among the inhabitants of the Mecklenburg area against the Colonial representatives of the British Crown, due to their unjust and arbitrary administration. This culminated in the prominent men of the County agreeing that a convention be held to formulate plans for the betterment of existing conditions. Col. Thos. Polk was authorized to call two delegates from each of the nine militia districts who were empowered to adopt such measures as seemed best calculated for the common cause.

The convention assembled in the Court House in Charlotte on May 19, 1775. Captain Adam Alexander was president of the convention, Abraham Alexander officiated as Chairman and John McKnitt Alexander acted as Secretary. On the following day a series of resolutions were adopted. These constituted the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence in which the citizens of Mecklenburg County declared themselves a free and independent people.

Could a virile, freedom loving people do less?

A few days later, May 31, before the Convention terminated, additional Resolutions ("Resolves")—the crux of the deliberations—were adopted. These pointed the way independence must be attained, namely, the setting up of a system of government independent of Crown authority.

Col. Adam Alexander and his brother, Captain Charles Alexander, were signers of these historic documents.

Col. Adam marched to Fayetteville to aid in quelling the Scotch Tories in Feb. 1776, but upon reaching Fayetteville learned of Caswell's and Lillington's victory over the Tories at Moore's Creek; so they returned home.

Adam Alexander was appointed Colonel of the Mecklenburg Militia by the Provincial Congress meeting in Halifax, April 4, 1776.

During the following summer the Cherokee Indians, incited by the British and Tories, increased their hostilities and committed great depredation upon the unprotected white settlements.

Col. Adam commanded the Mecklenburg regiment, including 80 Light Horsemen under Capt. Charles Polk. This campaign near the headwaters of the Catawba lasted several weeks and resulted in scattering the Indians.

The Mecklenburg militia continued to play an important part during the Revolution and few expeditions marched out of Charlotte that did not include Adam Alexander as an officer. Evidently his last appearance on the field was at the Battle of Camden, S. C., Aug. 16 and 18, 1780. He there commanded a regiment under Gen. Rutherford. In this ill advised and badly fought battle, Gen. Gates forced the North Carolina militia under Gen. Caswell, Smallwood's Marylanders, Continentals from Delaware and Virginia to take the brunt of the fighting. Gen. Rutherford was wounded and captured, but later released.

After the battle the Mecklenburg troops scurried home ahead of Cornwallis and participated in the campaign against him in Charlotte and at other points.

For many years Adam Alexander served his county well; as public officer he was ever willing to aid and represent his fellow citizens. Imagination may picture the Justice riding weary miles to Court; assisting friends in their personal and business matters; administering estates and collecting taxes: In his later days, after the Revolution, the Colonel acted as "Entry Taker" of Mecklenburg County, which entailed collecting the proceeds from the sale of "Bounty Lands" in Tennessee granted by the State to ex-soldiers of the Revolution.

On one particular occasion he rode to Salisbury in order to turn over several thousand dollars which was to be sent by messenger to the State Treasurer. A long and hazardous journey at that day and time for a man of his years.

Many years before (1764) "Justice Alexander" had been designed as one of the men to "make the return for the land lying in Duplin County, but asked to be relieved of this duty on account of "the distance of their situation."

In searching State and Court documents the name, or signature, of the Colonel is constantly found. He was highly esteemed and honored, and a man of substance; for he is often found as a trustee or administrator of estates and bondsman—yet of himself he left no written word.

Adam Alexander was a Justice of the peace and for many years he was a member of the County Court. In 1779, the County Court was composed of twelve Magistrates, ten of whom were Adam, Abraham, Hezekiah and John McKnitt Alexander, David Reese, John Foard, Robert Harris, Robert Harris, Jr., Robert Irwin and Edwards Giles.

These men elected the Sheriff as well as Tax Assessors and Collectors, and through them received and disbursed money collected by taxation, as well as preserving law and

order. This coterie of outstanding men largely directed the affairs of the County, and, in a large sense, controlled the Court and administered justice.

Col. Adam Alexander was a devout, consistent Presbyterian. From the Sunday that the Rev. McAden preached at "Justice Alexander's on Rock River" until his death he was a pillar of the church. There is no doubt that he was a member of Rocky River Presbyterian Church at the time that the Cumberland Presbytery (Penn.) sent Rev. Alexander Craighead to be its first pastor, in 1758. No doubt that he was an elder, as were Abraham, Aaron, Nathaniel and Daniel Alexander. Soon after another congregation was started a little nearer Clear Creek, known as Rocky Springs Church. This congregation with its little stone building, was due largely to the efforts of Adam Alexander. Later it became the Clear Creek Presbyterian Church, of which he was a ruling elder until his death. Still later this church became the Philadelphia Church, now located at Mint Hill a few miles east of Charlotte.

The unity and importance of the early churches before the Revolution is revealed by resolutions adopted at a meeting of representatives of Clear Creek and Providence churches, held Jan. 27, 1770. Their congregations were pledged "to stand and abide by each other from time to time throughout all difficulties, in order to obtain the labors of a gospel minister."

Adam Alexander was one of the delegates from Clear Creek church.

Dr. Caldwell wrote that when President George Washington visited Charlotte in 1791 the Mecklenburg Declaration was discussed and he met Adam and John McKnitt Alexander.

Col. Adam Alexander died in the brick mansion in Clear Creek, on Nov. 13, 1798, aged 70 years. He left no will, his lands having been given to his sons, or sold, during his

later years. His son, Charles Taylor, received over 1,000 acres of land and was appointed administrator of the estate. The inventory of the sale of personal property totaled 493 pounds, with an additional 117 pounds due on notes. This inventory included 30 books on travel, geography, lectures, essays and a dictionary—more books than usually found in a frontier home at that period.

Mary Shelby, wife of Adam Alexander, came from an illustrious colonial family, being the daughter of Evan and Catherine (Davies) Shelby who emigrated from Wales and in 1739 settled on a large tract in western Maryland, near Hagerstown. She was the sister of Gen. Evan Shelby, an officer in the French and Indian War, and aunt of Col. Isaac Shelby, one of the heroes of the Battle of King's Mountain and later the first governor of Kentucky.

Mary Shelby Alexander died in Clear Creek, Mecklenburg County, N. C., Nov. 26, 1813. Her will, dated Feb. 8, 1810, bequeathed her estate to her living children; her son, Isaac, being constituted executor. As a token of the simplicity of the time and place, a tiny scrap of paper found among the records in the Raleigh Archives reads thus: "Rec'd January first 1814, from Isaac Alexander the sum of five dollars for making his mother's coffin. Rankin Alex."

Adam and Mary Alexander are buried in the neglected Rock Spring graveyard, located two miles north of the Philadelphia Presbyterian Church, situated on a knoll about 500 feet from the road that leads to Stanley Corners, Marven and Albemarle. The cemetery is surrounded by a dilapidated stone wall and covered with second growth timber and underbrush—one of the oldest, if not the oldest, burial places in the County.

The single stone marking the resting place of Adam and Mary consists of a finely dressed white marble slab, about four feet in height, upon which is carved in perpendicular columns their names, birth and date of death.

Adam's epitaph concludes with this reference to his military leadership—"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death."

Col. Adam and Mary Shelby Alexander were the parents of the following children, all of whom were born in Mecklenburg and died in North Carolina.

1. Isaac Shelby was born June 7, 1756 and died Sept. 2, 1833. He married Ruth Reese, March 10, 1791, who died Oct. 28, 1825. Both are buried at Sugar Creek Presbyterian Church. Isaac held several county offices before he became Clerk of the Court about 1793. This office he held continuously until 1832, or after. He was a soldier of the Revolutionary War. The children of Isaac and Ruth were: Isaac Taylor (Clerk Isaac) who succeeded his father as Clerk of Court: Susan Ruth, Elmira Matilda.

About 1830, a controversy as to the authenticity of the Mecklenburg Declaration became acute and the State Legislature ordered an investigation; Assemblyman Evan Alexander, a grandson of Col. Adam, was a member of the investigating committee. The following valuable certificate constituted part of the corroborative evidence and was published in the "State Pamphlet." (Isaac was nineteen years of age at the time of the Mecklenburg Convention and in 1776 he served in Rutherford's campaign against the Cherokee Indians, so there is no doubt as to its documentary value.)

"I hereby certify that I was present in Charlotte on the 19th and 20th days of May, 1775, when a regular deputation from all the Captain's companies of militia in the County of Mecklenburg, to wit: Col. Thomas Polk, Col. Adam Alexander, Lieutenant Colonel Abraham Alexander, John McKnitt Alexander, Hezekiah Alexander, Ephraim Brevard and a number of others, who met to consult and take measures for the peace and tranquility of the citizens of said county, and who appointed Abraham Alexander their

Chairman, and Doctor Ephraim Brevard, Secretary; who, after due consultation, declared themselves absolved from their allegiance to the King of Great Britain, and drew up a Declaration of their Independence—. These are part of the transactions that took place at that time, as far as my recollection serves me. October 8, 1830." "Isaac Alexander."

2. Catherine was born April 6, 1759 and died July 4, 1824. She married John McCoy (McKoy), son of Arthur, and they had three sons and seven daughters.

3. Charles Taylor was born Aug. 9, 1764 and died in Clear Creek Township, Aug. 26, 1828. His consort was Margaret Means, daughter of John Means of the present Cabarrus County. They were married Dec. 28, 1796 and both are buried at Philadelphia church, where he was an elder. Charles Taylor was closely associated with his father in business management as well as the conduct of Adam's public offices. He held many offices and was a prominent man in church and State. He was a Colonel of militia and became possessed of a large portion of Col. Adam's land as well as his store and mill.

The children of Charles Taylor and Margaret Alexander were: Evan Shelby; John M.; Mary Shelby; Susan Caroline; Isaac Newton; Adam; William Taylor; Margaret Means; Charles Taylor; and second Charles Taylor.

4. Evan Shelby Alexander was born in 1767 and died in Salisbury, N. C., on Oct. 28, 1809, where he is buried in the old Lutheran cemetery. He was unmarried. Evan graduated from Princeton College in 1787 and practiced law in Salisbury. From 1796 to 1804, he was a member of the Legislature and also a trustee of the University of North Carolina. After Nathaniel Alexander was elected Governor of North Carolina, Evan S. Alexander was elected to the ninth Congress to fill his unexpired term.

5. Sarah Shelby died Oct. 11, 1842. Her husband was Capt. John Springs who came from Delaware and became

prominent. Their children were: Mary L.; Sarah Alexander; Adam Alexander; John B.; Sophia G.; William Polk, and they were the progenitors of the Springs of the Carolina's today.

6. Mary Shelby was born 1778 and died Aug. 18, 1838, being probably buried in the old Rock Spring graveyard. Mary married Dr. Cunningham Harris, son of Samuel, Jr., of Cabarrus County. Their family consisted of three daughters: Margaret Maria; Sarah A.; Catherine Caroline.

Adam Alexander—indeed, an extraordinary pioneer!

¹This plaque was sponsored by the Mecklenburg of Independence Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and unveiled by a 6th generation descendant of John Queary, Mrs. Ira L. Black, then regent of the Chapter, and incidentally a descendant of another signer—Adam Alexander, whose granddaughter, Margaret McKoy, married William Lemmond, a grandson of John Queary.

REFERENCES:

Court and land records obtained at source in the following counties: Accomac, Va.; Somerset, Talbot, Cecil, Frederick, Md.; New Castle, Delaware; Chester, Lancaster, York, Cumberland, Mifflin, Franklin, Bedford, Penna.; Rowan, Anson, Cabarrus, Iredell, Mecklenburg, Lincoln, Buncombe, N. C. Records and publications in the Hall of Records, Annapolis; Maryland Hist. Society; Library of Congress; D.A.R. Library; National Archives; Penna. Hist. Society; N. Y. Public Library; Penna. Archives; N. C. Dept. Archives and History. Historic and genealogic publications too numerous to identify; family records; graveyard inscriptions; personal correspondence.

PIONEER EXTRAORDINARY

CHAPTER XXVI

Benjamin Patton

Early Mecklenburg lost a number of its most valuable citizens, several of whom signed the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, when its northeast sector was sliced off in 1792 and organized as a separate county—called Cabarrus after Stephen Cabarrus, member of the General Assembly.

Benjamin Patton was one of the Signers who thus became a citizen of Cabarrus county where he and his brother, Samuel, owned considerable land.

His early life, however, has become so bedimmed by the shadows of the 182 years since he perpetuated his memory by signing that historic document that it has been quite impossible to trace any of his descendants—if he had any, since it is not known he was ever married; if he was married, the name of his spouse cannot be found. Nor is it known just when he moved into Mecklenburg; it is generally believed, though, that he emigrated to Mecklenburg with the wave of emigration from the Scotch-Irish settlements in Maryland and Pennsylvania in the 1740s, 1750s and 1760s.

We find his first land deed is dated January 24, 1762, when he purchased 250 acres on Buffalo creek in Anson

county, Mecklenburg not then having been formed as a county; this purchase was made from Provincial Governor Arthur Dobbs' royal grant.

He also obtained 82 acres on October 22, 1782, by state grant No. 164 on English Buffalo creek and 79 acres by state grant No. 119 and state grant No. 315 on Cold Water creek.

If he at any time sold any of this land no deeds were recorded either in Mecklenburg or Cabarrus county; it is likely perhaps he devised the land to some of his relatives, but if so his will cannot be found in Mecklenburg or Cabarrus county.

The earliest records of Cabarrus after its formation were meager and have been lost; it is possible, like several other signers from Cabarrus county, he moved to the "Western District" of North Carolina which however was in 1796 formed as the State of Tennessee when that area was ceded to the Union by North Carolina in return for its cancellation of the State's Revolutionary War debts.

Benjamin Patton served as a constable and also as tax collector when a citizen of Mecklenburg; it is accordingly believed he served his new county in similar capacities and that he participated in its local political affairs; yet his memory is best preserved, not only as a signer of the Declaration, but as one of the founders of the Poplar Tent Presbyterian church.

This church through the Daughters of the American Revolution perpetuated his memory as a signer of the Declaration with a bronze plaque placed upon the forewall of the church.

All efforts to locate any present-day descendants, if any, of this signer by use of the radio, much correspondence, newspaper releases and personal inquiry have failed; in-

quiry of the National headquarters of the Daughters of the American Revolution revealed the fact no member of that patriotic society entered under his name; hence, it is believed while he served as administrator of estates of several of his compatriots his life came to end soon after Cabarrus was sliced off Mecklenburg.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

We have been unable to locate any record of the name of Richard Harris in Mecklenburg either before or after the American Revolution and while Robert Harris is said to have been a signer a thorough research has failed to learn which Robert Harris of four then residing in Mecklenburg signed this historic document.

THE END

MECKLENBURG DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE MAY 20, 1775

Charlotte-town No Carolina May 20th 1775

1st Resolved that whosoever directly or indirectly abetted or in any way, form or manner countenanced the unchartered and dangerous invasion of our rights, as claimed by Great Britain, is an enemy to this county, to America, and to the inherent and inalienable rights of man.

2nd Resolved that we the citizens of Mecklenburg county, do hereby dissolve the political bands which have connected us to the Mother country, and hereby absolve ourselves from all allegiance to the British Crown, and abjure all political connection or association, with that nation, who have wantonly trampled on our rights and liberties and inhumanely shed the blood of American patriots at Lexington.

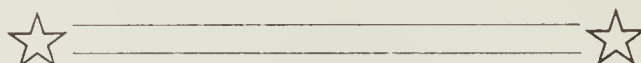
3rd Resolved that we do hereby declare ourselves a free and independent people; are, and of right ought to be a sovereign and self governing association, under the control of no power other than that of our God and the general government of the Congress; to the maintenance of which independence, we solemnly pledge to each other our mutual cooperation, our lives, or fortunes, and our most sacred honor.

4th Resolved that as we now acknowledge the existance and control of no law or legal officer civil or military, within this county, we do hereby ordain and adopt as a rule of life, all, each and every of our former laws, wherein, nevertheless, the Crown of Great Britain never can be considered as holding rights, privileges, immunities, or authority therein.

5th Resolved that it is further decreed, that all each and every military officer in this county, is hereby reinstated in his former command and authority, he acting conformably to these regulations, and that every member present of this delegation, shall henceforth be a civil officer—a Justice of the Peace in the character of a Committee man to issue process, hear and determine all matters of controversy, according to said adopted laws, and to preserve peace, union and harmony in said county—and use every exertion to spread the love of country and, fire of freedom throughout America until a more gen-

eral and organized government be established in this province.
 6th Resolved that a copy of these resolutions be transmitted by
 express to the President of the Continental Congress assembled in
 Philadelphia to be laid before that body.

John McKnitt Alexander	Thos. Polk	Ephraim Brevard
Benjamin Patton	Abraham Alexander	John Davidson
John Flennekin	Adam Alexander	Ezra Alexander
Hezekiah Alexander	Henry Downs	David Reese
Charles Alexander	John Ford	William Graham
Will Kennon	Richard Harris	Matthew McClure
Richard Barry	Neil Morrison	John Phifer
Hezekiah J. Balch	Robert Irwin	James Harris
Zaccheus Wilson	John Queary	Waightstill Avery



Descendants and Subscribers

Abernethy, Thomas Clay	Alverson, Mrs. M. S.
Charlotte, N. C.	Charlotte, N. C.
Alexander, Miss Hattie	Austin, Parks N.
Charlotte, N. C.	Charlotte, N. C.
Alexander, Miss Ida Moore	Antoon, Joseph L.
Charlotte, N. C.	Charlotte, N. C.
Alexander, Dr. George S.	Adams, Mrs. Marie McKinley
Kannapolis, N. C.	Charlotte, N. C.
Alexander, Robert Scott	Anderson, Mrs. Arthur Logan
Seneca, S. C.	Lincoln, Illinois
Alexander, Perry L., Sr.	American Trust Company
Charlotte, N. C.	Charlotte, N. C.
Allison, Charles W., Sr.	Bobbitt, Wm. H., Judge
Charlotte, N. C.	Raleigh, N. C.
Alexander, Will D.	Barringer, Osmond L.
Charlotte, N. C.	Charlotte, N. C.
Alexander, Miss Violet G.	Black, Mrs. Ira L.
Charlotte, N. C.	Charlotte, N. C.
Alexander, Robert F.	Burke, Ruth Vivian
Charlotte, N. C.	LaGrange, N. C.
Alexander, P. N.	Baber, John E.
Charlotte, N. C.	Jacksonville, Fla.
Alexander, Miss Cornelia	Beaty, Mrs. J. D.
Charlotte, N. C.	Raleigh, N. C.
Austin, Mrs. F. D., Sr.	Baxter, Herbert H.
Charlotte, N. C.	Charlotte, N. C.
Austin, Mrs. James	Belk, Mrs. William H.
Boynton Beach, Fla.	Charlotte, N. C.
Anderson, James	Birmingham Public Library
Charlotte, N. C.	Birmingham, Ala.
Allison, Mrs. C. W., Jr.	Branch, Mrs. John
Charlotte, N. C.	Tampa, Fla.

Butler, Mrs. Jane Z.
 Phoenix, Arizona
 Berkstresser, James A.
 New Castle, Pa.
 Bonitz, Fred W.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Broward, Mrs. Clark H.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Boggs, Aaron D.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Buchanan, Mrs. Sara Graham
 Anniston, Ala.
 Barnhardt, Mrs. Harris K.
 Davidson, N. C.
 Cramer, Stuart W., Jr.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Cox, Miss Z. Anita
 Memphis, Tenn.
 Carr, Dr. and Mrs. Chalmers R.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Coffey, Miss Rose Amanda
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Clarkson, Judge Francis O.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Commercial National Bank
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Cochran, Miss Minnie A.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Clark, J. B.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Caldwell, Mrs. Mary Grimes
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Charlotte Public Library
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Coone, L. A.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Carruth, Mrs. Margaret Scruggs
 Dallas, Texas
 Charlotte School Board
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Cain, Cyril E.
 State College, Miss.
 Cannon, Mrs. Charles
 Concord, N. C.
 Cofer, Mrs. P. H.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Carter, H.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Chester Public Library
 Chester, S. C.
 Cochran, Mrs. Maude S.
 Matthews, N. C.
 Daniel, Mrs. Charles F.
 Gastonia, N. C.
 DuRant, Mrs. R. S.
 Southern Pines, N. C.
 Douglas, Charles B.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Durham, John F.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Dellinger, Steve W.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Dockery, Henry C.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Deyton, Eloise A.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Dunlap, P. C.
 Wadesboro, N. C.
 Davidson, Mrs. Craighead
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Davidson, Miss Mary Louise
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Davidson, Miss Alice Caldwell
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Dudley, Charles
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Dixon, Mrs. Kay
 Gastonia, N. C.
 DeLorme, Harold M., Jr.
 Columbia, S. C.
 Dwelle, Mrs. Mary Morgan
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Downs, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth R.
 Pineville, N. C.
 DeLaney, Mary Downs
 Charlotte, N. C.
 DeArmon, Frank W.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Douglas, Ben E., Sr.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Douglas, Ben E., Jr.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Douglas, Robert L.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Davidson Public School
 Davidson, N. C.
 Dunlap, P. C.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Edwards, Mrs. Lillian Polk
 Relief, N. C.
 Evans, Mrs. Robert C.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Eastman, Miss Hazel
 Kansas City, Mo.
 Frazier, Mrs. Cecil
 New Albany, Miss.
 Foster, Elbert E.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Feimster, Mrs. Harold C.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Farmer, Lula Orr
 Anderson, S. C.
 Ferguson, W. A.
 Huntersville, N. C.
 Foxworth, Mrs. G. Duncan
 Marion, S. C.
 Ferguson, Mrs. W. A.
 Huntersville, N. C.
 Griffin, Clarence
 Forest City, N. C.
 Greensboro Public Library
 Greensboro, N. C.
 Goodwin, Mrs. Patsy H.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Gaston County Library
 Gastonia, N. C.
 Garibaldi, Linn D.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Guyton, Mrs. David E.
 Blue Mountain, Miss.
 Grey, Mrs. Georgie S.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Graham, T. W.
 Blue Springs, Miss.
 Gosnell, Mrs. Fred A.
 Arlington, Va.

Graham, Minnie B.
 Tuscola, Texas
 Gaskins, Mrs. Charles B.
 Elizabeth City, N. C.
 Glinke, Mrs. George W.
 Round Lake, Illinois
 Gibson, Mrs. Thomas W.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Genealogical Society
 Salt Lake City, Utah
 Hunter, Mrs. Madeline F.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Hayes, Robert G.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Henderson, J. G.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Hayes, Mrs. Madge Sadler
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Hunter, W. Eugene
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